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COMICS FEATURE

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VOL. I

AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF COMICS

THOR
THE MIGHTY!
and "THE STONE MEN from SATURN!"
THE LEGEND HAS COME TRUE! BY THE WILL OF THE GODS, I AM ALIVE! I AM INVINCIBLE! I AM--THOR!!!
3 DOLLAR COMIC
DC
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HAWKMAN • SHAZAM! • RED TORNADO
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6 SUPER-HERO SENSATIONS
WORLD'S FINEST
COMICS
EXTRA! ADAM STRANGE
HAWKMAN

Del Rosa

COMICS FEATURE

PRESENTS
AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF COMICS

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By Wendy Pini

INTRODUCTION

This book is a collection of memories and a history of a sort. Those of us old enough to remember the birth of comic book fandom will travel back through golden mists to the days of our youth. The days of wonder and joy when we first discovered the thrills of comic books and when we first began to find each other. Communications in those days was sporadic and depended on many people having the time and dedication to devote days to preparing and cutting stencils and then cranking out barely legible publications on mimeograph machines and dittoes. All the time knowing that what finally saw the light of day would be certain to lose money for the intripid publisher. But it was a labor of love and many titles did see the light of day.

These were also days of fear and dread. Fear that our peers would spy us reading a four color treasure and ostracize us as some kind of freak. Dread that our parents and teachers would learn of our nasty habit and take away our precious comic books all the time feeling that perhaps there was something, somehow wrong with us. Otherwise why would we spend our time with the gaudy objects. I was a bit luckier. My father faced the fear for me. He loved comic books but didn't want it known that he read them. So he would constantly buy them and then pretend that the purchase was for me. This eventually delivered a rather well read book into my grasping hands. Sometimes faster when dad felt that others were beginning to suspect that he might have a greater interest in them than he admitted.

Today these seem to be distant visions of a long gone past—no more real to the comic book readers of today than the Spanish Inquisition is to us all.

The modern era permits the growth of specialty stores and professional publications and widespread distribution. Publications such as *Comics Feature*. When I was young such a magazine was my fondest dream but an obvious impossibility. Certainly no one would put such effort into a magazine about comic books, and if they did no one would distribute or sell them. Now I am the publisher of one. Such is life.

The book you hold in your hands is a collection of some of the finest interviews, comic strips and characters profiles that have ever been done and in fact span a twenty year history of what was the leading magazine about comics for many, many years: *Rocket Blast Comics Collector*. Since that magazine has gone on an indefinite hiatus we are releasing the work under the title of our on-going magazine, but don't let that fool you. Instead of the spit and polish of the latter, the book is deliberately designed to invoke the nostalgia of the old RBCC. The love and caring are very obvious. The improvements that have been made since will also be obvious... but that is not the purpose of this book.

This book is divided into three parts and then a special section. But now let's just talk about the first: PEOPLE. This is a collection of interviews and profiles of some of the most important individuals in the history of modern comic books. Carmine Infantino—artist since the Golden Age and just appointed head of the largest comic book company in America; Stan Lee—the man who made the Marvel revolution, shortly to leave comic books for the wilds of Los Angeles animation; Roy Thomas—the heir apparent; Mike Zeck—then a fandom talent, now the experienced professional artist; John Goldwater—head of Archie Comics whose impact on comic books is little known but looms large; and Leonard Darvin and Fredric Wertham, respectively the head of the Comics Code Authority and the man who led to its creation, the censors. Plus a tour of DC Comics of the time. And classic period piece letters of the day, including ones penned by Ron Foss, Roy Thomas, Fred Hembeck and others whose names were once well known to afficiandos of the four color madness.

An Interview With

CARMINE INFANTINO, STAN LEE & ROY THOMAS

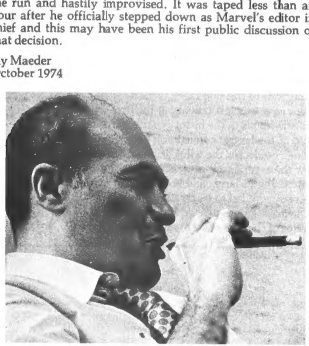
CONDUCTED BY JAY MAEDER

The following telephone interviews with Carmine Infantino, Stan Lee, and Roy Thomas were conducted in late August for The Miami Herald. The approach was straight-press as opposed to fan-press and the conversations inevitably touched on areas that will be familiar territory to many fans; other passages, despite the time that has elapsed since the interviews were done, are bound to be informative to one degree or another.

But the chief value of these transcriptions at this date, I would think, lies in the fact that, as recorded speech, they stand as often revealing self-portraits of the principals. To that end, they are largely verbatim: no effort has been made to formalize conversational ebbs and flows, and editing has been minimal. Ellipses are used principally to demonstrate speech rhythms and do not necessarily reflect deletions.

The Lee and Infantino interviews were pre-arranged and relatively structured. The Thomas interview was caught on the run and hastily improvised. It was taped less than an hour after he officially stepped down as Marvel's editor in chief and this may have been his first public discussion of that decision.

Jay Maeder
October 1974



CARMINE INFANTINO

You're one of the most influential men in comics . . .
Allegedly.

How did you get where you are?
Luck has an awful lot to do with these things. As a youngster I was brought up during the Depression years and there wasn't much outlet in those days for release of any kind of activity on the personal part, so I naturally migrated to something that I felt I could get out of my system.

I wasn't the greatest ballplayer, or the greatest this or the greatest that. Drawing seemed to come easily. Comics were in those days just beginning to come into their play. You know, Superman and Batman. And I migrated toward that, I guess, for the reason that Superman became popular. Because in that period everybody needed something. An outlet, a release. And that was the release. So it became so for me, and then ever so slowly I migrated into the business itself as a cartoonist.

I began with National. I was eighteen years old (1943). And I came up as a youngster and Shelley Mayer was the editor-in-chief in those days. He liked my work, brought me in, and he put me on the Flash and Hawkman. And we started there. And through the years I went from that to characters like Adam Strange and, let me see, Elongated Man and Detective Chimp, and then, of course, just before the heyday of the Batman thing they took me off everything and put me on the Batman.

From Batman I began to do just covers for National. And from covers . . . at that point they needed someone to come in as editor, because they felt the company needed new directions. The competition was kind of running us into the ground. Management at that particular period asked me if I would step in as editor and kind of try to help turn things around.

I frankly wasn't that interested because I knew it was big efforts and so on and so forth. But the pressure was on and I said okay, we'll give it a try. And what I did was contact people I'd worked with over the years who I knew had the thinking for new and different kinds of editorials. And I got people like Joe Kubert in as editor, fellows like Joe Orlando . . . and then just redirected some of the olds pros like Julie Schwartz, Murray Boltinoff . . . And we did a whole reshaping of the company. Brought in a rash of young writers, instead of the old tired ones who . . . some of the editors at that time were strictly pulp editors. And that doesn't help put visuals, and I knew that people like Orlando and Kubert would give us the visual backgrounds with the scripts. They're both very diligent exciting guys and they knew their craft.

Then, as management changed, and this company was bought by Warner Communications, the management that existed went on to other things and they left the company and suddenly I was the publisher. Then the president of the company left and suddenly I was the president.

We haven't stopped trying new things. The dollar books . . . this is one of the areas we're really trying to open up. We think comics have a new form, a new shape. The acceptance is quite good. And we've developed from that point a dump bin, where they put eighty in a box, and this is in a display

Mike Zeck

unit they put out on the floor. That was done for specialized markets . . . 7-11 tried them, and JC Penney is trying them, and some bookstores. What's happening really is that the arms of the comics are reaching beyond the newsstands. They're heading for the bookstores and the commercial houses like Penney and Sears Roebuck and areas like that.

Comics in general are achieving a real legitimacy.

Yeah, well, you know, in Europe they're considered a tremendous art form. I think what's happening—I hope what's happening, anyway—you know, like jazz many years ago, there was no respect in this country for jazz until the French found it and considered it a tremendous art form. And eventually we got to understand our own product. I think the same thing is happening with comics.

I just came back, in May I think it was, from Lucca, Italy, where they had a huge convention. they turned the entire town over and they donated a castle to exhibit work permanently. They had linguists from every country of the east and west bloc and they went into dialogues on the backgrounds and the philosophies and the directions . . . they take it quite seriously over there. And some of that is beginning to overlap here now. because every city in this country is beginning to spring up with conventions...some of our competitiors will disagree, but I think fandom began by itself. And has developed by itself. I really don't believe that the publishers have had much to do with the thing. . .

Suddenly it's becoming a very potent force. There's something catching hold, there's a grassroots thing going on. And something else that's going on, we're getting tremendous feedback from schools. They find it's the only way they can teach kids. The only way a child will sit down and read. We have a program now where we're developing certain of our characters for the New York City system. If this works we're going into other cities. We have Cincinnati very interested. And we have the West Coast very interested. So I think that what was considered the junk of one generation may end up becoming the jewel of the next.

Tell me about a day in the life of a comics czar.

Today we're setting print runs. That goes on once a week . . . I design every cover that comes out of National Periodicals. Every single one. I do the initial lay-out, and then we pass them on to an artist who goes from there . . . We have story conferences once a week with all the editors: how to hypo the existing material, new and different approaches, to develop the products of not only this year but next year and the years to come beyond that . . . We go on publicity campaigns whenever we can to promote our new and special products . . . We sit in with circulation. I just came back from a four-city-in-two-days trip to wholesalers, to make sure our product is there and we're getting enough exposure and so on and so forth . . . Develop budgets for the following year.

It's an encompassing job.

Do you personally oversee scripts?

No. No. That I leave to the editors. The only thing I get involved in . . . in any new venture we're going to take I will sit with the editors and listen to the directions they're going. If I approve, I keep quiet. If I don't approve, then I jump in. Or, if there's one of our characters or one of our books that's not doing too well, I will sit in at that point and read and try to evaluate what's wrong with it and how we can correct it.

And you are, of course, the boss.

Yeah.

Well, I usually don't try to make final decisions on these things. I don't treat the thing like a dictatorship. I usually have the round-robin group sit in. I find it's better that way. The people I hired, I trust implicitly. I trust their judgement. We have a thing where we'll sit down and go and tear into anything. And if I'm wrong they'll come back and tell me I'm wrong, they don't agree, and so on and so forth...If the majority feels that way I'll reevaluate my own thinking. We really don't have this thing run as a monolithic situation.

Who reads comic books? Is there, in fact, a sharply defined audience?

Gee, there used to be. I don't think there is any more. There was a point when I think the range went from about seven to eleven and that was it. But we find now that the scope is broadening . . . I think the number moves up to fifteen and sixteen and then there's a little loop . . . We understand the colleges are very heavy into the comics now. They're reading them very strongly and they're watching them very carefully. So we know there's a tremendous college audience. I don't know if it goes beyond that point. There may be some older, but I don't think en masse.

One of the problems with a popular medium is that the popular taste is a fleeting commodity . . . you've got to be constantly looking for not only viable new properties but viable themes. What are you looking for today? What does the 1974 reader expect from a comic?

Yeah. that's a good question. I think that now, the interrelationship of people is the big thing. People have felt a tremendous isolation from one another. What we are developing now with our characters is the interrelationship, people to people. The reactions of each other, for each other, and by each other . . . I think that's something that's been lost and missing, and people are looking for it desperately. That's what we'll be feeding into our books now. Scripts I believe very strongly in. It begins with the word. You go from there. Without the word you have nothing. So we're very heavy into our scripts.

Do you feel there's a trend away from Costumed Superhero literature?

There was. I think it's moving back. We sold a show last year to Hanna-Barbera . . . "Superfriends." Up until that point the costumed characters were slipping, there's no question about it, their appeal was just eroding away. Since the advent of that show the licensing has just gone crazy for these characters. Bedsheets, draperies, shoes, dolls, etcetera etcetera nine million things. This I think has restimulated the youngsters into an interest in superheroes again. For example, Shazam will be on CBS every Saturday morning. We're negotiating now for a huge Superman film to be done overseas . . . a huge big budget film. There's going to be a Shazam theatrical thing. . .

I think it's a reawakening of this interest again. I think people are looking for heroes. They haven't had any in our country for the last couple of years. I think the Watergate thing has kind of developed that situation. Because there are no more leaders, and they're looking desperately.

It had seemed to me that the venerable old titles, action adventure, detective . . . were not commanding the same interest they once did.

Not quite true. Superman has always been the number one bestseller. And he still holds that position strongly. He's still the strongest.

We've made big changes in Superman . . . moved him out of the newspaper office and into TV. That was a meeting with myself and Julie Schwartz and some of the writers. We felt at that point we wanted to move him forward. The newspaper syndrome, which was big earlier, was gone. You know. So we figured the best way to propel him into the '60s and '70s was to keep him on as a TV announcer . . .

This was regarded as a gamble, was it not?

A little, a little. Because a character as solid as that, you can't just tamper with, you know. But we had to moved him forward. I don't think youngsters today relate to a newspaper like they did twenty years ago. And they do relate to a newscaster of TV.

He was beginning to slip. There were other factors that were wrong . . . At one point I took the books home and just read them, studied them. The key factor, it was the initial double identity thing. . . was missing. You know, you remember the old Charles Atlas ads . . .

That man is the biggest bully on the beach.
That's the one. And that's what was missing. Clark Kent was always the weakling, had to come across as one so Superman could live out the dreams. And it had just disappeared completely. It was so basic, so simple . . . And the minute we put it back in, the thing started moving again. So it changed the whole concept back to the original concept, with moderm variations on the thing.

He's going to be bigger and stronger than ever.

What are your most successful titles at this point?
Superman . . . Batman . . . Swamp Thing is one. That's rising very quickly. . . .

The first reaction to Redondo was, gee, we don't know, he isn't Wrightson, and so on. By the second issue he's suddenly getting applause. And there's no more even mentioned of Wrightson. There's this transit period in between . ..I remember the hue and cry when I left the Flash. I'll never read it again, and so on. Well, they go through this period and decide, okay, maybe I'll look at it again. And we put, you know, Irv Novick on the Batman and Ross Andru on the Flash, and one or two issues and Infantino was forgotten completely. Well, I don't think Wrightson will ever be forgotten, but I do think this new fellow is going to make a name for himself. He's tremendous.

The Flash is moving back up again like crazy. Tarzan is very strong for us. Let's see what else we've got . . . Shazam is starting to move again, it's starting to wake up. And I think the TV show is going to be a tremendous hit. Strangely enough there's another character that does well for us every Christmas . . . Rudolph, a perennial does very well every time we bring it out.

The Action One first edition did very well. Those we'll be getting into more. We're very pleased with them.

The other side of that question is, what isn't doing so well?
Romance. They were very strong, till a few years ago. It may be the new lifestyle that's emerging in this country . . . you know, the freedom, the sexuality. I don't know. We certainly can't compete with a Penthouse or a Oui, and I'm sure the youngsters are into that. And with the films around that are very open, you know, the attitudes—you just can't put out a romance book like you could years ago.

An endangered species, are they?
That's right.

Does Anyone Care?
We do.

What else isn't doing so well?
That's the weakest. And we have Weird Western. That started very slowly. It seems to be building, but there's no tremendous print run with that thing. There seems to be a thing about westerns in this country, you really can't sell them the way you'd like to. I think Weird Western is beautifully done . . . It's holding in there.

Most of Joe's books do well. The Phantom Stranger does well, and the mystery books. Plop is building for us, slowly but surely. We seem to have tapped a raw nerve there. I think it's going to be a big one.

The last set of circulation figures I saw reflect that Wonder Woman was very weak. Is that still the Case?
No. That's turning around. And I can't give you a reason for it. We can't figure it . . . Gloria Steinem may be into it, but I don't think the twelve, ten, eleven year old girl is. But it's building again. WE can't undestand it . . .

That could be, too, because of the Superfriends show because Aquaman, out of the blue, we get a tremendous amount of mail on Aquaman. Haven't produced him in ages. Aquaman, Aquaman, the kids want Aquaman. Exposure on TV has a tremendous effect on circulation.

This is undoubtedly an oversimplification, but it seems to me that the titles that get cancelled are those that are the most sophisticated and intelligently produced titles. Any number of examples come to mind . . .
New Gods, right?

New Gods, yeah. The Demon. Bat Lash, Enemy Ace, most recently Iron Wolf. . .
The New Gods thing. A tremendous college audience, but the youngsters didn't dig it. They couldn't understand it. The college kids flaked out completely, but the audience was not broad enough to carry the book . . .

There's a line you must cross. Apparently we didn't hit the key. The New Gods hit one area but couldn't pick up the other level. I was sorry to see New Gods go, too. And Jack was in tears over it. And he was right, he was really building this thing into a tremendous epic. You never know, there may come a day when we'll bring it back. But it just never picked up that circulation. Hung around a forty percent sale and bang, that was it.

You're not in business to lose money . . .
No. And we just finally had to give up. The mail was unreal. . . . pouring in, complaining. . .

Bat Lash is something else. Bat Lash is a particular favorite. . . I wrote that thing. We had the whole group working on it. And we really loved that book. Just a delight. That book would not sell in this country. The sales were so bad. But in Europe, that character has been sold and resold, every other year they keep bringing it back. When I was in Lucca they made mention of it, said it was one of the best comic books every produced. Here we couldn't move it.

The Iron Wolf thing took off well and then it just kind of sank. We're coming out with two new ones in that area. Joe Orlando will be handling one of them and Denny O'Neil's going to be handling the other.

C. C. Beck has made his own feelings very well known regarding his being dropped from Shazam. This is an issue you've probably heard enough about, but do you care to address yourself to it?
Sure. It's very basic. When C.C. was hired he was given scripts. . . . and slowly but surely he began changing the scripts into what he thought the character should be. The editor came to me and said, I don't think it's right this way, let's sit down and talk to C.C. and go over it. And we did. We had him in and I said, look, you've got any ideas, express them to the editors and maybe you can work together. But you don't have the license to do this on your own. And at that point C.C. says to me, either he takes complete control of Shazam or nothing.

Well, it's like you have your generals in the field. You put your trust in your generals, rather than your privates. And I said, C.C., if that's how you feel, then it's nothing. Period. It was unfortunate. But I couldn't have him move that way, taking complete control of something I knew he couldn't possibly handle.

Because the editor is the one I will rap if this thing dies. It's the editor's neck, not C.C.'s. You know, in the old days, when C.C. did the strip originally, he never wrote it. It was

always other people who wrote the thing. And he suddenly felt he knew the character better than anyone in the world. Which wasn't quite true, we don't think.

I hated to see him go. I think he's a fine cartoonist and I'd love to have him back. But there's a line always drawn, you know, and he had just gone beyond it

I think I've covered that one.

Marvel has traditionally been a very trendy publisher, exploiting this and exploiting that... right now it s experiencing some success with the Kung Fu material and vampirism and werewolfism and things like that. These are areas National hasn't touched. And I'm wondering what sort of editorial philosophies there are that determine precisely what you're going to get into. I mean, do I presume correctly that at one point or another you've had to sit down and say, hm, well, I wonder if we ought to be doing a Kung Fu book . . .

Well, we are, you know. We're related to Warner Brothers, and we'll be doing the TV show. I think Denny O'Neil's going to handle that and will be beginning sometime this year. That's the one we've always wanted, the real one.

As far as the werewolves and the Dracula thing. . . no, editorial policy here was to avoid that sort of thing. Because, you know, I still have quakes about the old days, the Kefauver Committee and so on and so forth, and I didn't want our people to go that heavy into this kind of stuff.

I'm very strong for the Code. I've always been. Because some publishers will go crazy if you don't have that sort of thing, and then you may have the old days back again. Which I certainly wouldn't want to see. It almost destroyed this business before, and it could do it again.

You have recurrent nightmares?

Sure. It caused a stigma on this industry . . . parents didn't want their children to read comics, and understandably. Some of that stuff was brutal. And the next group of youngsters that grew up grew into the comics and I don't think their feelings are the same way about it. And I don't want any of that recurring again.

So I'm strongly for the Code and I want to watch everything we produce.

What projects does National have coming up?

There are going to be a lot of new titles in there . . . I can't divulge them, it's such a highly competitive field and you can't . . . We're coming out with one, in our dollar format, all brand new, that we're very excited about. It's an epic, we've worked on if for years, and we think it's going to cut loose like crazy.

You hold rights to much of the old quality line . . .

Yes. We're negotiating now for Blackhawk for a movie, and something could come from that if it opens up. Plastic Man and Dollman we will use from time to time. There are some other characters too, like Uncle Sam and the Black Condor and all... I imagine from time to time we'll be using them. And again, if the hero thing cuts loose, we may just open them all up again. Yeah, we'd probably reissue the Black Condor and the Ray. But it would have to be a real explosion of superheroes.

And that hasn't happened yet.

Not at this moment.

Will National be going into the black & white line?

No. I don't see that as a step forward. Not for us, anyway.

What's the competition doing that you enjoy reading?

I don't read them. Honestly, no, I don't. I don't wantto be influenced by what they do. I'd rather our people go in their own directions. I don't knock what they do. If it works for them, fine. But it's not our thing. And I'd rather we do our thing our way.

Any predictions what effects the new Goodman line will have on the market?

Marty has always been a sharp publisher, he's one of the best. I think the area he's going most deeply into will be the black and whites. I think that's what he's after. He'll have a few comic titles. How strong? I don't know. We'll have to wait and see. I wouldn't sell him short.

Let's talk about the economic picture. . .

Terrible. Unbelievable. Every month a raise.

But it's unavoidable.

That's right. No, we can't do a thing about it. We tried to hang onto that twenty-cent price as long as we could, and finally it just broke our back. The last one just did it to us. So we've had to go to the quarter, we just couldn't hold it any longer.

And that's not the end of it. There are more raises coming. I don't know where it's going to end.

You know, the thing I'm concerned most about is, there comes a day . . . you can keep raising and raising prices but it's going to come a time the reader will cut you off.

That's the obvious question. You're talking about your eight and nine year old readers . . . no way are these kids going to cough up sixty cents for a comic book.

Absolutely.

What do you figure are the long range effects on the market?

On the sixty cent market? Well, we can't hold it at that price. That's what. And rather than raise the price again I've got to restructure that book. Certainly I'm not going up with that thing. That's for sure. And to keep it where it is . . . I cant because of the economic crunch coming with the paper. So we have to reshape that into something else entirely. I don't know what.

The dollar one, too, could be in jeopardy eventually. I hope not, because that's where I think the future is. It's opened up not only a whole new posture in the lifestyle of the magazines but it's opened up new markets where comics have never been. So I really hope we can hold the line there, because I think that's our future.

Point blank, just how much trouble are comics in?

Trouble? The sales of comics in the past six months have risen sharply. They've just gone up like a bullet, I think the paper shortage that happened originally was part of that. There was less material out there, and suddenly they were being put out constantly. So the sales for the first six months were unusual for everyone.

What will happen now that there's enough paper, but at higher prices . . . I don't know, quite frankly. There could be a glut on the market again that could cause a tumble.

I think the strong will remain. The quality will be there. The rest will fall by the wayside.

In any event, therewill have to be drastic format changes.

Yes. There will have to be. We're trying to work them out now. We know that they've got just so much to spend . . . we certainly don't want to bleed these kids to death, I don't think it's fair. So . . . I've got to reshape. So I know I can suit their means. Once I can do that I'll be in the ballpark again. That's why I think some of those black and whites going out at 75 cents and a dollar . . . that's pretty heavy.

There's been a persistent rumor that Kinney National hasn't been very happy with National's financial performance. . .
Yeah, we've had that too. WE think one of our competitors had something to do with that . . .

The rumor says that National just isn't very long for this world.
Oh, Jesus. On the contrary. I don't want to go into budget things, but we've just been complimented on how well we did for the first six months of the year by the very top brass. That's usually a pretty good sign. No, we're long for this world and we're long for this company.

Twenty years from now, when the comic historians that day look back on this particular period . . . what do you think there will be to say?
Wow. . . that's . . . I think they'll say we were at the crossroads. Breaking through into education. I think that may be the key they're going to be talking about. That this period in history. . . the turnaround began with the legitimacy of these books in the educational market. Twenty years from-now they'll be teaching children with these things. The historians will find that this point was the turnaround.

Teachers are writing to us, asking for books, and we're sending them. It's like I say, and I think it's true. . . the junk of one generation. . .

Finis

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STAN LEE

There are probably worse things to be than the wildly celebrated king of the comics. I imagine you rather enjoy being Stan Lee.

It wasn't always this way, I must admit. In the first fifteen years or so that I was the head writer and editor at Timely and Atlas, I remember, my wife and I would go to cocktail parties and somebody would say, what do you do, and I'd say, oh, I'm a writer. Really? What do you write? And I'd start getting a little nervous and I'd say, uh, magazine stories . . . Really? What magazine? And I knew there was no way of avoiding it, and I'd end up saying comic books, and suddenly the person's expression would change . . . oh. . . isn't that nice . . . and walk away, you know, looking for some television or radio or novelist celebrity.

That's all changed now. I go to places and I'm held up as one of the more interesting celebrities . . . and people go over to the playwrights, you know, and say hey, I want you to meet Stan Lee, he's the head of Marvel Comics, he made up Spiderman. And I must say I'm very happy that this has happened. It's like achieving one of my goals, because I remember I wrote an editorial, it must have been a good fifteen years ago, and I said one of our main objectives would be bringing some additional measure of respect to comics, that I would consider myself and our company successful if we found a way before we were through this vale of tears to elevate comics in the minds of the public. So that if somebody said, I write comics, or I draw for comics, that people would say, hey, really? Tell us about it. And not say, a grown man like you? You know what I mean?

So from that point of view I'm very happy now.

How did you get where you are?
Sheer accident. I never wanted to be a writer particularly. As a kid I joined the WPA Federal Theatre, I wanted to be an actor. But there wasn't enough money . . . and I always loved advertising and the closest I could get to it was I found a job writing copy for a news service, and then I started writing obituaries for people who were still alive, and I was writing publicity releases for the National Jewish Tuberculosis Hospital in Denver. All of which was pretty depressing.

A million things, you know. I was an office boy for a trousers company, I was an usher at the Rivoli Theatre. Anyway, they had a contest at the Herald Tribune, an essay contest, which I won three weeks running, and whoever the editor was at the time called me and asked me to stop entering the contest. And he asked me what I intended to be. I was just out of high school, you know, and I said, well, I don't know, an advertising man or an actor or a lawyer or something, and he said why don't you be a writer?

Conincidentally I learned of a job that was opening up at Timely Comics. They needed a gopher. Timely Comics then had Joe Simon and Jack Kirby, and they had just sort of created Captain America, and they were doing the Human Torch and Sub-Mariner, and I came in, and before I knew it-they had me writing Captain America and they had me doing some editing . . . Shortly thereafter Joe and Jack left, and I was like the only guy there and the publisher asked me if I could fill in as editor until he found someone else.
And he never found anyone and I've been there ever since.

I never thought of it as a permanent job. I never particularly wanted to be in the comic book business and I always figured, hey, this is great, I'll stay here a year or two or three until I make some money and then I'll write the Great American Novel. And for years and years I stayed in the job, never thinking of it as my permanent career. For years this went on. And I was too dumb to realize, hey, this is what you're doing, Stan, this is it. I always had this feeling of temporaries.

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And business got bad and we had to fire a lot of people...I was left with a skeleton crew, which consisted mostly of me. And we were living at Timely under the conditions where every few years there was a new trend. We'd be very big in westerns and suddenly the western field dried up and we had to find a new trend, and we'd be doing a lot of superheroes and then there was a lack of interest in superheroes so we had to find a new trend...and we'd do romances or mysteries or funny animals. Whatever. And there was no...I mean, I'd write one as well, or as badly, as another. It never made a difference to me what type of thing we were doing.

The Code was no problem to me. We never put out books that I felt were too violent or objectionable. They certainly weren't sexy. I never had trouble putting out books that would be acceptable to whoever had to accept them. So when this period came around, it was just like another new trend. Okay, we've got to drop the so-called horror stories and now we've go to find something else to do. And we did. We came out with...I don't even remember what we came out with, but I assume we found something.

The whole Atlas thing...this was not the greatest period the comics have ever known...
Yeah.

Atlas is into the journey into unknown world thing, you know, you and Kirby and Ditko are doing variations on the Japanese monster film, fin fang foom and all this...and somewhere in here you start dreaming about a whole different approach, and what I'm asking is this: was this an accidental thing or did you guys sit down and very deliberately create a revolution.
Both. It was accidental and I did it deliberately. What happened was, like I say, I'd been thinking it was a temporary job, you know, I'm waiting till I've saved up enough money so I can quit and go do something else. And my wife said to me one day, Stan, when are you gonna realize this is permanent? And instead of looking to do something sensational in some other field, why don't you make something sensational about what you're doing? I mean, you're writing, you are creating...do something really good.

Well, of course, up until then I had always done mostly what the publisher wanted. As you mentioned, it was not a glorious period for the comics. Certainly not for our company. And our publisher, who also published other types of books—movie books and crossword puzzle books and so on, the slicks—by this time he had left the comics pretty much in my hands. He didn't have any tremendous interest. They weren't doing all that well and he wasn't that much concerned, I suspect. And coincidentally my publisher walks in one day and he says, you know, Stan, I just realized, I was looking at some sales figures, and I see that National Comic's Justice League seems to be selling pretty good. That's a bunch of superheroes, Stan, maybe we ought to form a team of superheroes. Maybe there's a market for that now.

So all three things came together: my wife telling me why don't you do something good, the fact that I was able to do almost anything because the publisher wasn't that much on top of what we were doing, and the fact that he wanted a superhero team.

So I figured okay, I'll do it as I've always done it, I will do as he says and give him a superhero team. Only this time I'm going to make it totally different from anything before. As different as I could make it. I figured, I'm sick of stories where the hero always wins and he's always one hundred percent good and the villain is one hundred percent bad and all that sort of thing. So I figured, this time I'm going to get a team of characters who don't hew to the mold. Fighting amongst themselves...the Torch wants to quit because he's not making enough money. The Thing wants to get out because he's not getting enough glory and he thinks Reed Richards is hogging all the headlines. Occasionally a crook gets away or beats them up. They're evicted from their skyscraper because they can't pay the rent because Reed Richards invests all their reward money in stocks and the market takes a nosedive...I tried to do everything I could to take these super-powered characters and in some way to make them realistic and human. To have them react the way normal men might react if those normal men happened to have super-hero powers.

And then I carried it forth with Spiderman. So he's got the proportionate power of a spider, or whatever. Isn't it still conceivable that he might have halitosis or fallen arches or dandruff or acne? Mightn't he have problems with money? Does it follow that just because he's Spiderman all the girls are gonna love him?

I tried to figure how many fallible features I could give Spiderman. Almost all of our characters. Iron Man with his weak heart, and the fact that he's a munitions maker and a capitalist and people hate him and think he's a fascist. And Captain America who felt he was an anarchronism because here he is a big patriotic figure at a time when patriotism really isn't in vogue...

And I suddenly realized I was enjoying what I was doing. I could have been writing movies: I was worrying about characterization, I was worrying about dialogue...When I wrote Thor I had him speaking in a semi-Shakespearean manner. Everybody told me I was crazy. They told me that no little kid is going to read stories whose characters say thing like get thee hence, varlet! And I said the hell they won't. Well, Thor became one of our most popular characters, and I used to get letters from college kids who'd say I've been reading Thor and I've just noticed that you're actually writing in blank verse, the meter is perfect, it scans, and they started discussing it in class and so forth...and I'd get letters from kids who were doing term papers on the origins of Doctor Strange's incantations and they'd say, well, it's obvious from my research that you're basing this on old Druid writings. Which was nice to know, considering I'd never read old Druid writings...

So I felt I was doing things that hadn't been done before. I was able to get away with it because nobody was really paying very much attention.

I tried to introduce style. Heretofore nearly all the stories had been done, ours and the competition's, in the same style...the caption would say "therefore" or "the next day" or "meanwhile"...that was the extent of the captions. I tried to write captions that said something. I tried to develop an informal breezy method of communicating with the reader. We inaugurated the Bullpen Bulletin Page, kind of a club page, where we brought the reader into our little circle and made him a friend rather than just a fan or a reader...

Your instincts are in advertising and promotion...
Funny you should say that, I was just thinking about that the other night. Thinking back, the whole thing was treated like an advertising campaign. The catch phrases, like "Make Mine Marvel" and "Face Front" and "Excelsior"...I did it unconsciously, but it all was in the direction as though, I guess, as though I was building a product. I wanted to make Marvel Comics a product that people...would love.

It probably has a lot to do with the general frame of mind of the industry in that doldrums period...because, you know, you're telling me that your wife is saying to you, well, look, Stan, how come you don't try to do something good. Because the implication here is that this is something that just never occurred to you.

Well, that's right. See, I was always thinking that the good things I did would be done outside of comics. Because what the hell good can you do in comics? You know.

So if I'd get an idea for a story, I'd never say this would be great for Captain America, I'd say, hey, wouldn't this make a great movie, I'm gonna make a not of it. Someday when I have a chance I'll do a screenplay. So finally she said do something good in comics. And that really had *not* occurred to me.

Luckily and coincidentally, it began to happen at a period of time when a spirit of informality was pervading society...

Yeah, Marvel did to comics, I think, pretty much what the Beatles did to music, and of course we're talking about approximately the same period of time. It was a pretty creative period in general. You must have felt really swollen with fertility.

Yeah. It's true. It was a very exciting period. And the best thing about it, it hasn't ended. I think I have the same feeling of excitement at this moment that I had fifteen years ago.

Just how much have things changed? What are your current readers expecting from Marvel?

They're expecting us to be in the forefront. If there are innovations they expect Marvel to come up with them. We try not to let them down...I think there's a feeling of quality. We've sort of become known as the Rolls Royce of the comic book industry. They expect our artwork to be a little better, our stories to be a little better...I don't know that we always succeed, but we're surely always trying.

The change in our position now...the only problem is our own success has made it difficult to continue the way we're going, because we're putting out so many books...And a lot

of it is a personal problem of mine: it's hard for me to turn down...if we have an idea for a book that I think is good it's hard for me to say, well, look, we don't have the time to do it, we don't have enough men to do it, let's forget it. Because I figure, no, it's a good idea, and the time is right, we'll find a way to do it, we'll get another artist...And we have such a tremendous workload now that, unlike other people in other fields, our problems are never knowing what to do. We know the stories to do, we know the artwork we should be using, we know what the reader wants. We never have the problem of, my God, what if they stop liking our stories, what if we're doing the wrong things...We think we know the right thing to do, but it's hard to find the time to do it.

And this is a recurring criticism of the Marvel Group is some segments of the fan press. That it spreads itself too thin.
And they're right. But for every one that criticizes us for that, there are fifty others who say why don't you guys put out more science fiction, why don't you guys give us more...anything, you know. And we always try to satisfy them and we always try to satisfy our own enthusiasm.

Whatwe should do as we add new books is drop old ones, but from a business point of view, even our worst selling books are making fairly good money. And you simply cannot drop a property that is making money, when other companies are just looking for anything that will show a profit.

Who is your market? Who reads Marvel?
Our market is not the same as our competition's. There are books for younger kids, like the Archie group and the Harvey group...Our closest competition, the DC line has pretty much our market but I don't believe, and they might deny this, I can't speak for them, I think we have far and away the largest older audience, and by older I mean of college age and in many cases older than college age. I do a lot of lecturing on campuses probably a minimum of twice a month, and I usually lecture to very large and enthusiastic audiences. In fact, I would say I'm probably one of the most in demand college lecturers today.

The incredible thing about it is here we are one form of media that not only seems to appeal to older people but we still have as many younger readers as any other comic book group, if not more. We seem to have luckily found the way to produce a product that can be enthusiastically enjoyed by kids from the age of six to twelve and also enjoyed and appreciated by one of the most sophisticated and hardest to please groups in the world, which is the high school and college kids.

So I'm very proud of that. I would think that's one of our biggest successes.

Well, I don't want to sound smug. Sure, I have great feelings of satisfaction but there's a lot that I think we're doing wrong. I've been trapped into, as I say, I think I made a mistake somewhere by having so many books, and I don't know what the answer is to that, it's frustrating. I don't have time to personally supervise every one the way I did years ago. You remember I told you this company published other magazines as well, the slicks, well, I've been made publisher of those too. I don't have a minute to turn around. And I wish there were more hours in the day because some things aren't being handled as meticulous as I would like to do them...

Which brings us to something that is bound to be a fairly big item in the fan press...
Yeah.

And, okay, a couple of years back you moved out of the editor's chair, and it was widely believed at the time that Roy Thomas was your heir apparent.
Yeah.

He isn't in that editor's chair anymore, and apparently you will be devoting more of your energies to the day to day editorial product, more so that you have been in the last couple of years.
Right.

What's going on up there?
Well. Roy...who I think is just one of the most talented guys that...we have been so lucky to have had him all of these years...he's made it possible for me to go on to somewhat other duties and still feel secure for the comics...but...for one reason or another, Roy felt that he'd rather spend more time writing. I think Roy...I don't know how you're going to write this, and I don't know how to word it so it will sound right..as you move higher in the executive level here, it involves getting more involved the business area. And there are certain decisions made in business that sometimes go against the grain creatively but which have to be lived with. And I'm aware of these things and Roy...would fight them. Quite a bit.

And I just felt there was getting to be almost a political problem. Not between Roy and me. But just, I felt Roy was spending, I think Roy felt this too, he was spending so much time having to worry about conflicts between the business end and the creative end. And so forth. We sort of decided that it might be better if Roy just...he's going to still be an editor, he'll still edit the books he's doing. And he'll be editor emeritus, so to speak.

And I felt also, maybe it is better for me to get back into this as much as possible, because Marvel in the beginning had been so much a, well, I don't want to say a one-man operation, but...I just think maybe it's easier if I'm a little closer on top of everything.

And I have a feeling I've said this wrong and I'm going to hate the way you write it.

Well, corporation polilitics are interesting...I'm not sure to what extent, though, that...
Please don't make it sound like I'm knocking the corporation.

Yeah, I understand that you're not. I think we're going to need to deal bluntly with the circumstances of the resignation. Was it entirely voluntary on his part?
...well...I think it was, yes. I mean, Roy and I are very friendly. He's going to be working exclusively for us. It's just...he'll be able to devote himself purely to the creative end. He'll not have to be bothered with all the matters of company policy, you know, at the business level.

Because it's been common rumor in the fan press for a while that Lee simply hasn't been very happy with the directions the line had taken. The thing with, you know, there was a story about Stan Lee picking up a copy of Thor after not having seen it for months, and...
I remember Brancatelli writing that. He wrote many things that weren't true...you know, you're faced with these things, and what can you do, I don't have time to write refutations. I had picked up a magazine, that was one instance out of thousands of instances, I'm always picking up the magazines and I was usually always saying hey Roy, Jesus, I just looked at the FF, what a great story, you never told me about that plot, it's sensational...I just picked up this, where did you get this artist, he's the best on I've seen...One day I picked up a Thor and I said, hey, you know, a few of these words, the sentence structure seems to be a little bit different...I don't even remember what I

disagreed about. I said, I have the feeling he's a little off the track here, and I wanted to mention it, we spoke to the writer and...I mean, it was an absolutely nothing incident.

Would it be fair to say that, inasmuch as you are planning to return to closer control of the day to day product, that there was, to one degree or another a feeling on your part that things were off the track?
No, I just feel that it needs somebody...it probably needs one person who would be able to have the...correct overview. And I think, at the moment, I'm the logical person.

You see, we had so many books it was virtually becoming impossible for Roy to edit them. If you're producing fifty books a month, how the hell can you edit them if you're one person. There sin't even time to read them. After a while an editor becomes almost a traffic manager...

I really don't think that editorially we had gotten off the track. And I'm not saying this politically. Don't forget, I was always in editorial control, I was always determining what books we would put out and what the style would be. I would oversee the covers. And Roy would discuss with me any major policy changes if the storylines were going to take unusual directions.

But I left the actual editing and art direction to Roy. And I was perfectly happy, the books were absolutely in the direction I wanted them to be. Had they not been I would have changed them. Because it's much too important a business, and too personal a business, for me to allow the books not to be the way I feel they should be.

In any case, you're going to be taking a firmer stance at the helm, and the question is what's going to happen now at Marvel in ways that the Marvelite will find apparent?
I don't think there's going to be much difference. We have some very good other editors. We have Marv Wolfman who'll be devoting himself to the black and white books mostly. We have Len Wein, who will be devoting himself to the color comics mostly. We have John Romita who I'm going to be working with closely.

And we still have Roy, who's going to be writing most of our important books and who's going to be available to consult with me just about all the time. He'll be doing Conan, probably the Fantastic Four, Dracula...it will be his choice, whatever books he wants to do. I'll give him that option, certainly.

Will you be doing any writing at all?
I would love to, but at the moment it doesn't look as though I'm going to have time. The one book I've been wanting to bring back, the Silver Surfer...I keep delaying it, because it's one character I don't want to bring back unless I can write him myself. And...I don't know, it looks like I just get busier and busier. There are screenplays I'm supposed to be writing, that I've committed myself to, and I keep putting those off because I don't have time. And I have a feeling we'll have to do a sequel to the book, the Origin of Marvel Comics, and I don't know when I'm going to write that.

What are Marvel's top selling titles today?
Spiderman is still our biggest character. And Conan is very big. The so-called vampire, werewolf, that particular field, whatever you call it, that's doing well. The kung fu has done fantastically well. The beautiful thing is that the difference between our top-selling books and our just regular books isn't very great. Virtually everything we're doing is doing well. I have the feeling that Cadence Industries is really totally delighted with the progress of Marvel.

The success you've had with the vampire material is interesting in its own right, because it wasn't so many years ago that you couldn't produce something like that. Do you think the code will loosen up any more?
Not really that much more. You know, we're still always conscious that we're producing a lot of books for very young kids. I don't see how it can loosen up much more. But by the same token the Code has to be reasonable. If any little kid six years of age can go to movies and see pictures that are just one bloodbath after another and can watch things of that sort on television hour after hour...apparently it's the feeling of the Code that it's very silly not to allow even the mention of the name "vampire"...

But I think that, compared to most of the other things that kids are exposed to, our books are still rather tame.

Why did Jack Kirby leave Marvel?
Oh...I don't even know the real reason. I suspect that Jack just felt maybe like I felt after all those years, I wanted to do something different...that he wanted to do his own thing. The first few years of his career, so many things said by Joe Simon and Jack Kirby...I suspect he woke up one morning and said, gee, all these years everything has said by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby and he probably wanted to prove how good he is on his own.

I know we never had a fight. We got along beautifully. I have the utmost respect for his ability and I wish he'd come back.

There was talk, at the time of the trilogy folded, that he was in fact returning to Marvel.
Yes. I'd met Jack once or twice and told him I'd like to have him back and he seemed very interested. But the last time...I don't know. Jack is a rather personal person. He keeps things to himself. I dont know what his plans are at this point.

What's your competition doing that you enjoy?
I don't want to sound like the kind of guy who isn't up on what's happening in the field but I simply, in the past six months, haven't had time to look at their books. I look at the type of books they're putting out...the sixty cent books and

the twenty cent books and so forth, but I haven't really read anything of theirs.

And I wonder what predictions you might have on what effect the new Goodman line will have on the market.
Oh, I'd be very surprised if it has much of an effect. I think it's reached the point where there isn't much that can happen...We're by far the biggest selling company now and have been for quite a while. The only thing that could really hurt us would be ourselves. If we start slackening in our own efforts to produce good material. If we start getting careless. But it would be unlikely that any external source could affect things too much.

The last area I'd like to discuss is the economy. Publishers, like everyone else, are caught up in the inflationary spiral...just how bad are things? What is the outlook? How will Marvel deal with the problems that there are?
I think that we're really in a pretty good position. The biggest problem, of course, is the increase in the price of paper, the price of printing...when we get a printing raise, in one fell swoop that means a quarter of a million dollars more or somewhere in that neighborhood each time the price is raised. But basically I think we're in a pretty good spot. We have our audience, we think we know what our audience wants, we seem to have the staff to provide it, and we hope that we're bright enough and alert enough to move with the times. We're always trying to anticipate problems. We try to build cushions into our budgets to provide for them.

I worry a little. I wonder after a while if the economy itself goes sour how long people will be able to afford to spend money on the higher and higher priced publications, not only comics but all of them.

However, I must say that so far there seems to be no diminution of sales. And I really don't expect that the comic book field will change that radically, because I think there's always going to be a market for color comics. Because they're still one of the cheapest and apparently most satisfying forms of entertainment. Luckily, even in a recession, people want to be entertained, they want to take their minds off things. And one of the things that Marvel gives them is entertainment. Just sheer basic entertainment.

And I'm rather hoping that people will always have a quarter or a half dollar or whatever in their pockets for a few hours of entertainment.

Finis

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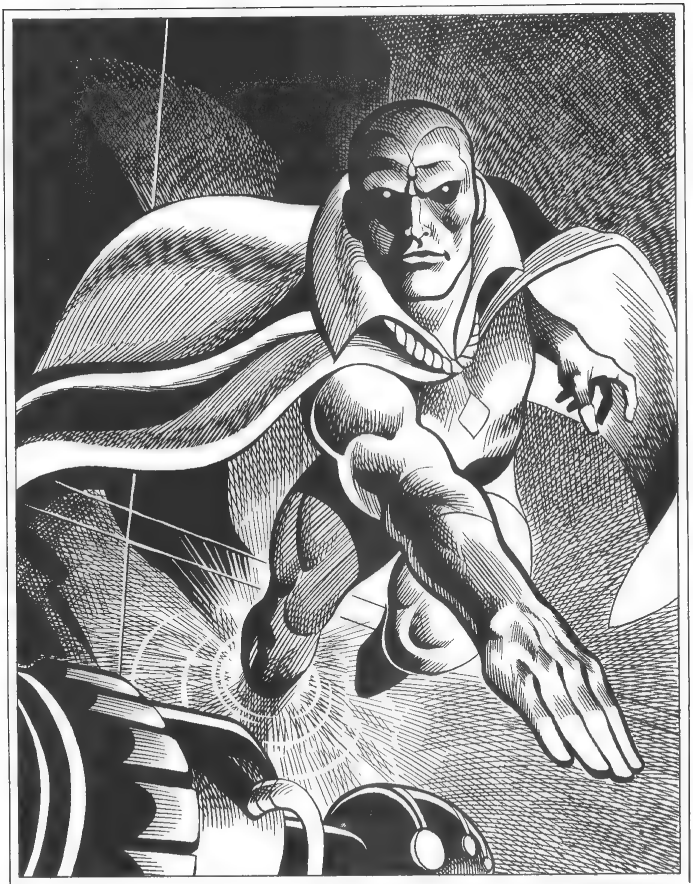
ROY THOMAS

Anything else i was going to ask is probably eclipsed by the fact that you're no longer Marvel's editor in chief. So, for the record. Let's start there. What's Happening?
Well, some of the things are too personal to go into, and they are, you know, purely personal and have nothing to do with Marvel at all. Like, my desire to move out of the New York area and so forth. And part of it quite frankly, this is known in the field, I felt that I didn't make a particularly good corpoate person. Marvel is owned by a conglomerate now...I've never been particularly good at subordinating my own personality with its faults or virtues or anything else to a kind of collective mind which is aimed primarily at the economic side of things without consideration for other factors. And this led me into a lot of conflicts in my role as editor in chief because I would be, from time to time, in disagreement with corporate policy and I wasn't, you know, particularly quiet about it. And finally it got to the point where my disagreements were such that I preferred to involve myself solely with the creative side rather than worry about the business side.

What was the nature of the disagreement?
Well, I'd probably better not go into it too much. Most of it had to do with different ways that I felt this or that should be structured, part of it had to do with the return to the people who create the story and the art, it had to do with reprint rights, had to do with the amount of money I felt they should get...various things of this sort which ended up with my being thought of as too much of a...I don't know...union boss maybe, which I'm obviously not. It was all aimed, of course, at making Marvel healthier, by making people feel they had a vested interest in the comics field. I just feel there are things wrong inside the field...It got to the point where I felt there wasn't anything more I could do as a crusader and the thing to do was to take myself out of the running.

You felt oppressed by the corporation?
Not personally oppressed, no. I've always been treated quite well here. Marvel's been a pretty good company, more than most, in allowing some self-expression and my relationship with Stan has been basically pretty good. I've felt I've made things a little difficult for him because he would be caught between me and the conglomerate, you know, not able to change Marvel policy and at the same time not able to shut me up or keep me from coming into conflicts. Listen, I'd be invited to say what I think should be done and what I said thought should be done quite often ran contrary to corporate policy. And, you know, I don't make much of a mute for a yes-man.

But I have no personal major economic gripes about the company. It was merely what I felt should be done in terms of general policy toward, you know, people. I felt there should be reprint payments, payment for foreign reproduction...many of which I feel Stan agrees with me on, but the conglomerate was not ready for some of this. And it got to the point where it became kind of unpleasant. It just became a personal thing where I felt I was not going to be able to...I didn't have the time and the energy to devote to two different things, the one being the creative side and the other being the economic side. Which I felt I had to do because I felt there was nobody else who was going to.


KEMPEL
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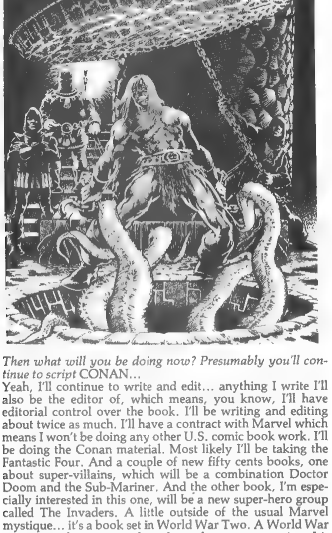
So finally I just decided I may as well go back to writing. You know, that was only one of several reasons and it really shouldn't be given play as the ultimate reason. Combine this with the fact that I have a desire to be able to move out of the New York area, with the fact that I desire to do more writing and less of this purely commercial kind of thing... you know, put them all together and it seemed to me that maybe the time had come for me to make a change in my life, and this seemed to be the best time to make it, before I got involved in anything else.



Then what will you be doing now? Presumably you'll continue to script CONAN...

Yeah, I'll continue to write and edit... anything I write I'll also be the editor of, which means, you know, I'll have editorial control over the book. I'll be writing and editing about twice as much. I'll have a contract with Marvel which means I won't be doing any other U.S. comic book work. I'll be doing the Conan material. Most likely I'll be taking the Fantastic Four. And a couple of new fifty cents books, one about super-villains, which will be a combination Doctor Doom and the Sub-Mariner. And the other book, I'm especially interested in this one, will be a new super-hero group called The Invaders. A little outside of the usual Marvel mystique... it's a book set in World War Two. A World War Two super-hero comic done from the 70s perspective. It's the original Human Torch and Toro, you know, and Captain America and Bucky and the Sub-Mariner, guest starring other super-heroes of the time. With the main super-villain of course being Hitler. It's going to be a very strange comic. I'm not sure yet how I'm going to be handling it. I'll probably be working on it with Frank Robbins and Neal Adams. Neal would like to do one or so, but I've talked to Robbins and... you know, Robbins has just become the regular Captain America artist here. He's adjusted very well to Marvel. I think he can achieve the balance of fantasy and seriousness that I'd like to get into this book. The Invaders is on the budget for next year, so I imagine it will be showing up around January or February or something like that... the rest of the book will contain reprints, of course, some of which haven't been seen since the 40s. We have access to good black and white stats and we hope the reproduction will be quite good.

I hope to make it a freewheeling book. I hope to enjoy doing it as much as I used to enjoy doing the Avengers. The Hulk and the Avengers, you know, those were the two most likely books I should have taken back, for purely commercial reasons, even they are both doing quite well without me. I had sort of a prior claim on them... but the guys who are doing them now are very attached to them, so I'll find something else.

Evidently the whole super-hero thing is just as strong as it ever was.

It seems to go through phases. I remember a couple of years ago when everybody was predicting the complete death of the super-hero, but they merely went underground for a little while and now they're back as proud as ever.

Of course, we have more variations on things now. We have, you know, a kung fu super-hero or two... the proliferation of monster-type super-heroes... Conan was a switch on the super-hero... Buckler's new Deathlok book... they're all variations on the idea of the super-hero. My own thing will be closer to a straight Marvel book but even there, simply by moving it back into 1942, immediately after Pearl Harbor, I mean all the stories will take place between Pearl Harbor and D-Day, will automatically have to make it, you know, this is a case of different approaches. Combination of nostalgia and interest in World War Two and a little bit of everything.

And, you know, combine the kung fu interest with either a more realistic strip like Master of Kung Fu and the Fu Manchu material that we had an option on or a whole new thing like Iron Fist who combines the super-hero with kung fu. And the possibilities are endless, and it gives a chance to keep the Marvel style going and at the same time it gives people a chance to expand on it. Like, Gerry Conway pointed out to me a couple of years ago, in Raymond Chandler's introduction to "The Simple Art of Murder," he said the desire of every writer who's not a hopeless hack is to exceed the limits of the formula without violating what makes the formula work. And I think that's what we're trying to do here basically.

What is your own perception of the "Marvel Mystique?"

I don't know if I ever, like, you know, had time to sit down and philosophize, because we were always too busy turning out the books, but the main approach is simply to treat the characters as the right kind of blend of fantasy with enough realism to make the people seem really real. To make the characters and the situations seem to matter and not to be the simple thing of cops and robbers, you know, how they're going to blast open the bank vault kind of thing. The success of a TV series, they say, is how much the audience is in love with the characters. We want to have these people interested in our set of characters, whether they're lovable characters or diabolical characters. And to follow that through, you know, put this guy in this situation and see what happens, put this guy in that situation and see what happens.

And I think people accepted Marvel because they could sense everything from Stan and Jack in 1961 on, they could sense the enthusiasm. The things that have done the best here in the last thirteen, fourteen years have been the things that have demonstrated the most enthusiasm in the writing and the art, whether it was Stan and Jack and the other people in the old days, myself and the others on Conan, you know, people wanted to do kung fu and we said okay, guys like Frank Brunner and Jim Starlin, you know, give them chances to draw things like Doctor Strange and Captain Marvel and sort of let them shape it themselves, let Rich

YES, AMPHIBUS. HE MUST HAVE ENTERED THRU THE EMPRESS ABYSS—JUST AS I ONCE DID!
BUT—UNLIKE ME, HE NEVER RETURNED FROM WHENCE HE CAME!
AND...HE'S DEAD!

Buckler do Deathlok with a minimum of interference because we figured why bother changing it, things of this sort... Steve Englehart's enthusiasms for a certain view of Captain America. A case of just getting people together you feel have talent, who understand what you want and at the same time have something new to offer on their own and let them do their thing. At the same time, of course, keeping the few values that you know about, things like keep it exciting and full of life and death feeling and pathos, things of that sort.

Is the distinguished competition doing anything that you enjoy

Not really. I mean, I enjoy some issues of things like Swamp Thing. I certainly had respect for things like Deadman and the old Green Lantern/Green Arrow material, even though I wasn't surprised that they failed. I enjoy certain aspects of Joe Kubert's Tarzan even though I don't like his writing. But on the whole I would say very very little. This despite the fact that I have every admiration for some of their writers and artists.

I think it's more a case of... you know, I just feel that somehow, something about the structure of that place, its divisions into petty little fiefs and so forth, sort of stultifies creativity. Even if there is a particularly creative book it seems as if it never influences anybody else. Like Kirby, he's been there a few years, in addition to it eventually stultifying his own work, there is not one artist at National who has been influenced in any way, shape or form by Jack.

Who's the Marvel audience?

It's a large audience, it's a number of audiences... it's a young and enthusiastic audience interested in adventure. Whether they realize it or not they're interested in characterization too, that comes as they get older and move up the scale from one book to another book. It's a pretty hip audience. Sometimes they expect more of us than we're prepared to give... but still a pretty bright audience.

Yeah, organized fandom tends to be pretty demanding about what it thinks publishers ought to be doing.

A whole different aura from when I was in the group. In the main it's kind of a healthy thing. But... you know... a couple of dozen people get together and decide among themselves what a major company should do and they seem surprised when we don't take them seriously.

Your own relationship with fandom has occasionally been antagonistic.

Yeah, well, I felt I had a fairly realistic attitude as to what fans should and should not expect. And you know, I don't expect myself necessarily to be looked up to or thought of as a god either, but if they were going to voice their opinions I figured I could voice mine too. And I saw no reason to avoid conflicts if somebody was going to say something stupid.

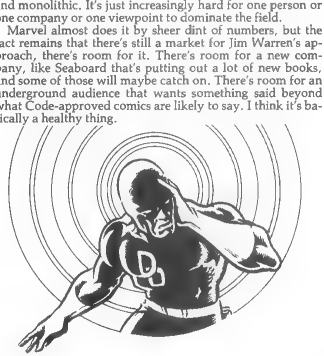
Fandom isn't a significant part of the audience anyway.

Oh no, it's tremendously insignificant. However, it's mere vocalness gives it a voice beyond what it would otherwise have, and then combine that with the fact that such a large number of professionals in the past few years have come out of fandom, it really does make it much more important than its numbers warrant. It's mainly important as that, as training ground and a place to hone your ideas, to seek your own particular alternatives. I mean, fandom is a very good thing, but it's necessarily good for the reason that some of the people in it think it is.

As for the future of the business?

I think we're entering a good time. I think things are likely to fragment in comics, they've already begun, very much the way they've fragmented in almost all the other media. For example, it's obvious that it's much harder now for a person or a group to come along and make the same kind of impact that, say, Elvis Presley or the Beatles or even Barbara Streisand did. It's harder for a movie star to become quite as big and monolithic. It's just increasingly hard for one person or one company or one viewpoint to dominate the field.

Marvel almost does it by sheer dint of numbers, but the fact remains that there's still a market for Jim Warren's approach, there's room for it. There's room for a new company, like Seaboard that's putting out a lot of new books, and some of those will maybe catch on. There's room for an underground audience that wants something said beyond what Code-approved comics are likely to say. I think it's basically a healthy thing.



ROCKETEER GOSSIP

by Paul Gambaccini

Anybody who does not believe that DC is not the King of the Field need only to visit the pros for the proof. I mentioned last issue that Gold Key inspired a comparatively low volume of mail—at best, 70 letters per title per week. Marvel comes next—I once calculated, based on information culled from Stan Lee, that it would cost Marvel over $1,000 per year to answer every single letter. Of course, this problem is eliminated by not answering any mail at all. (Note that on the Merry Marvel Marching Society record—which must be a best-seller deserving of ranking in *Billboard*'s "Hot 100," judging from the apparently fanatical following—over 600 memberships were processed and filled before the announcement reached the stands.) Stan thanks all the Marvel fans—yes, thanks—provided that they keep their criticisms and suggestions short so more of the same Marvel material may be produced, and don't ask to be admitted to the premises because they wouldn't be allowed anyway, and keep buying twelve comics per month...)

DC, however, gets the most mail of all, and even answers some of it. A visit and tour there will be the best way to convey the truths guiding their publishing philosophy, so let's take one as I took one during '64.

Anyone who doubts that DC encourages a tremendous number of youthful fanatics need only gaze at the crowd assembled for the Thursday (weekly) tour. "I love DC!" proclaimed a manila envelope in black magic marker. It was held by a youthful fan. Another one said: "Anyone from DC sign here." When one sees this collection of tots, one doesn't wonder that many titles are slanted at the ten-year-old mind.

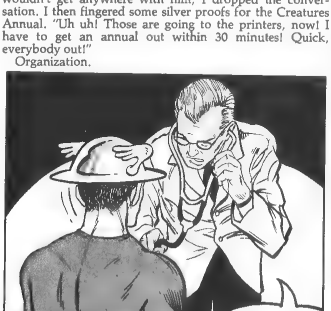
I hate to digress, but this serves to illustrate another point. While reading (no, not a comic...), waiting for the tour to begin, somebody introduced himself as "Steve Keisman from the Con." Somebody else introduced himself as "_____ from the Con." (I expected someone to say "Joe from the Moon," but I avoided this...) Anyway, these fellows had *Detective* #40 or thereabouts on their person. You never saw such a scrambling! One young fan, who had gleefully boasted to his brother that he had recently found a 1960 edition of *Superman*, nearly fainted at this discovery. So how can we fans, who cry for "older reprints from the 40s," react, when we see 700,000 of such fans, except to realize that perhaps our demands are slightly off base?

At any rate, the tour progressed as conducted by somebody whose name I don't know. To be brief, he gave a summary of original art, pencils, inks, and so forth—nothing that most of fandom's members wouldn't know, but something the youngsters evidently enjoyed. I noted, however, the original art files arranged in a case, still contained *Mr. District Attorney*. An editor I asked had no idea why the file was still there.

Outside of this instruction, the guide showed people through the art room, allowing time for gasps after each introduction ("Here is Murphy Anderson inking a future Hawkman story...(gasp!))...("Next...") He then offered foreign comics to those studying a foreign language. Undoubtedly some fans lied, but that was to be expected. The guide then gave everybody a slice of a Sunday Superman original art page, admonishing them not to sell them. "If we knew these could be sold for money, we'd sell them ourselves." (I actually think he meant it. Who can confirm the story that Charlton is offering *Blue Beetle* artwork at $20 per page?)

My main interest in being at these DC offices was talking with the editors, but I was rather disappointed with some. Mort Weisinger, who had promised me both original artwork and a short talk, started his conversation with, "So you're the great critic. And what do *you* want?" Seeing I wouldn't get anywhere with him, I dropped the conversation. I then fingered some silver proofs for the Creatures Annual. "Uh uh! Those are going to the printers, now! I have to get an annual out within 30 minutes! Quick, everybody out!"

Organization.



It appeared to me that Mort just gave everybody the same offer—original art and a talk—with the invitation to "Drop in and see me. I'll be glad to meet you." Frankly, that's about all he did—he met you. I saw others who received the same treatment. "You said I could come in and see you." "Well?" was his reply. Needless to say, I was not particularly impressed with Mr. Weisinger.

Another non-favorite, Robert Kanigher, looked at me as if I was insane when I attempted to take a picture of Julius Schwartz. Mr. Kanigher, who was wearing a sports jacket and a yellow bow-tie, and whose dislike of fandom is widelyknown (how many caught that quote in the January *Wonder Woman* that was cited in *Batmania* #3?) "Wonder Woman faces the worst threat since fanzines..." or something to that effect), didn't know my identity or I would have undoubtedly received a verbal lambasting that others received. Several New York fans had told me of the discussions they had with Julius Schwartz when Robert Kanigher came in. One said the latter came over and lashed into Jerry Bails for 20 minutes. Whether this is true or not, it certainly appears to be typical. It's too bad when he can't accept our criticism, and it's too bad we can't accept his philosophies—his war stories are often outstanding.

I was supposed to talk with Murrey Boltinoff, but he was out, so I chatted with George Kashdan. It was, unfortunately, a nervous conversation, totally unlike that with Bill Harris or that with Al Feldstein in another *Mad* trip. I immediately felt like I was on the defensive: "You've written many _____ letters." I didn't catch the word, but knew from the tone of voice that it was not complimentary. "Do you honestly feel that such behavior will improve the comics, or are you doing this for spite?" I discussed a few theories on comics, whereupon he surprised me with his opinion on fandom.

"It's too organized," he complained, "and those people don't realize the economics behind the comics. They want things they cannot possibly get." (*Editor's note: Like Hawkman and Captain America?*) He pointed to the *Who's Who* he had just received. "Things like the Academy are bad." Kashdan then complained, in his scholarly fashion, that Jerry Bails (by name) and others who seriously (or so he felt) considered comics as entertainment which adults should enjoy as serious fare were way off base. He pointed out that comics are designed mainly for kids, and have to be kept that way. "We try to have a little bit for everybody, but we have to have a monster story for each spy story to appeal to the youngsters."

Back to fandom, he pointed out fans, who probably have many comics, know many of comicdom's tricks, and always expect something new. They expect adult stories, which cannot always be expected in a market generally slanted toward youngsters. He immediately grilled me on my reading habits, but fortunately they are so widespread that I was safe here. Although Mr. Kashdan was basically friendly, I could see that he wasn't thrilled to see me. I couldn't continue our conversation myself, but he felt compelled, out of politeness. "For instance, who do you think fans like that (organized fandom) would pick among artists as their favorites?" I mentioned Infantino and Kubert, mainly on the basis of their fine Alley Award performances. He pointed out that youngsters enjoy the styles of Ely, etc., then startled me. "Who do you think is the pros' favorite?" I ventured Kubert. "Yes," he nodded, "but on my books it's Mort Meskin." I was, naturally, stunned, although I knew Steve Ditko was of the same opinion. "No matter what I give him in the way of a story, I always know he'll experiment and come up with something different in his artwork. It may or may not be successful, but the fact is that he has been experimenting with so many techniques since he entered the field in the early 40s, that he commands the respect of most of the men in the business."

After I examined his schedule for future months, and commented on the JSA team-up upcoming in *Showcase*, and on the *Metamorpho* book, he asked me how I got such information. After replying, I bid him good-bye. Frankly, I was pretty disconcerted. I could see that I really couldn't get across to him.

I then ventured into a small writing room where Bill Finger and another writer were writing scripts. (Another ambitious chap had left the room for a conference with Jack Schiff.) I glanced at his typewriter

"*Strange Adventures*, January, 'Mystery of the...'"

Seeing that Bill Finger was having more luck with inspiration, I talked with him briefly. At this time, he was writing "Zero Hour for Earth." He indicated that he knew me from the fanzines, told me I could take copies of 1958 editions of yellowed *Blackhawk* stacks (late dealer returns?), and introduced me to the other fellow there. I noted a copy of the *Spider-Man Annual* tucked underneath his DC editions. He membled that he didn't regularly read the opposition, but only kept tabs on what was going on...

I don't think I'll ever go back to see the DC personalities—or at least those I've already seen—at least for a long time. I can see their policy—We get our money from kids, so we produce for kids. I can't fight it, and I can't reconcile myself to it. I'll just have to avoid it. (*Editor's note: Fortunately for fandom, Mr. Schwartz is sympathetic to our cause and has done a great deal for fandom.*)

But they *do* make money from it. National Periodical Publications was added to the American Stock Exchange this summer under the symbol of "NPP," and a stock chart symbol "National Period." The fall low was around $13 a share, but it has risen to a current (around the new year) $19. This fact was proudly revealed in the *CMAA Newsletter*, organ of the Comics Code. This organization runs the code, and I was shocked to find in another edition of the same title that the Code is *not* freer than ever. Although fans continue to note increased blood in the comics—*Batman* murders, those naked men in *Hawkman* #6, a little sexier females here and there, more deaths and more gore, *I-SPY* allowed—*more* stories were rejected during the first portion of 1964 (including those comics produced for late '64 release) than for the previous year. So Mrs. Guy Percy Trulock is evidently keeping busy.

MIKE ZECK: ANOTHER FANDOM TALENT EMERGES

Many of the professional artists in the comic field today rose from the ranks of fandom. Names which come immediately to mind are Berni Wrightson, Don Newton, Mike Kaluta, Jim Starlin, Dave Cockrum and others. The most recent fan artist to be added to this list of accomplished talent is Mike Zeck. Just slightly over a year ago Mike was completely unknown to fandom until he had a Conan cover appear on *RBCC* #109. After I took over *The RBCC* with #113 I immediately sought out Mike for more work. He provided me with several recent drawings he'd done as well as a three page Sub-Mariner strip he'd drawn several months earlier for a portfolio of art he'd submitted for consideration to Marvel. Although this helped him sell a couple of full page drawings to them for the black and white magazines, little else happened. He secured text illustration work with Charlton comics and did a number of these until February when they sent him a six page script to see how he could handle a strip. It was a werewolf strip titled "That Old Gang Of Mine". They made it clear that should they be dissatisfied with the results, that would be it. But they weren't dissatisfied and in fact immediately sent him two more scripts.

One interesting side note on this first strip they sent Mike to do is that the ending struck me as a bit heavy for a Charlton strip. The script indicated sound effect noises "Chomp, Chomp" and the hands of the dead man's body being visible as the wolves devour him. But Mike drew it as it was described and after submitting it the editor wrote back and said he liked it very much but that they'd have to remove the chomping sound effects from the last panel as well as the visible hands. Eh?! Since when does an editor edit a script *after* it's drawn? Needless to say, Mike was learning the eccentricities of comic book editors. Below I've printed that last panel as Mike originally drew it. It will be slightly altered when Charlton prints the entire strip, sometime this summer.

The second script they sent him, titled "Only a Toy" concerns a hijacking. The script described scenes with a

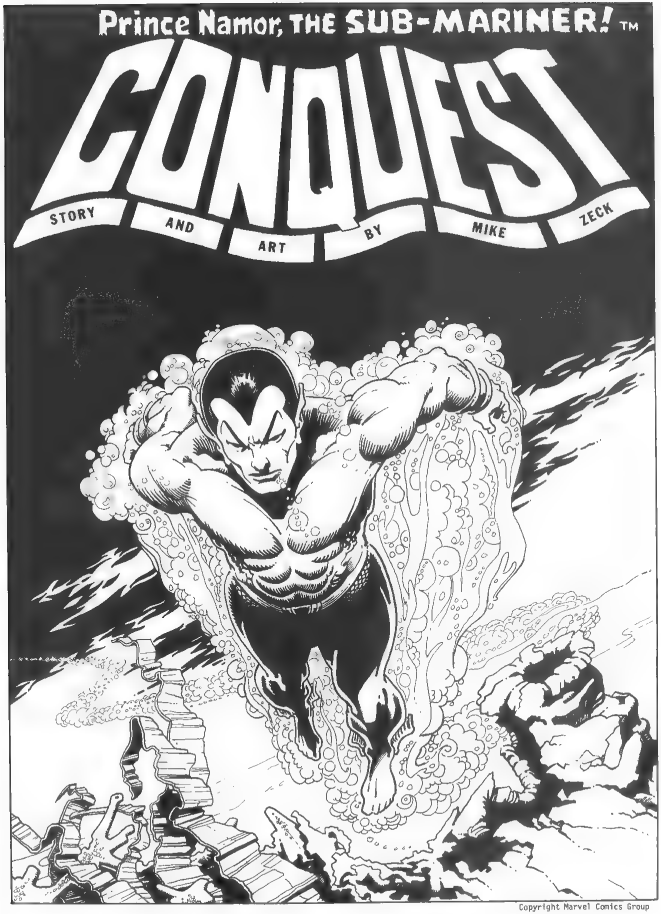
man having his head split by an axe and another being run through with a lance. Mike knew that no matter what the script said about their explicitness, that the editor would change it after it was drawn, so Mike used shadowing and angles to make them acceptable. Panels from this strip appear on this page. You might notice that the plane's pilot resembles a rather well known actor. This is not an accident.

Other strips Mike has drawn for Charlton are "The Obsessed," a gothic tale; two one page fillers which are unsigned (one about a giant spider web, and the other about a TV which turns a man off); and "Distress" which is an excellent sword and sorcery tale and spans five pages. And by the time this appears in *The RBCC* Mike will have already drawn another. His strips will start appearing soon in the new titles *MONSTER HUNTERS* and *SCARY TALES*, probably the second issues, as well as other titles. Watch for them!

But this is not all!! Marvel Comics telephoned Mike and has comissioned him to draw a Solomon Kane story for *KULL AND THE BARBARIANS*. The two page werewolf strip I mentioned I had last issue, Marvel wants to use for the first two pages, and Doug Moench will write a story to go with it. Thus that strip won't be appearing in *The RBCC* after all due to Marvel wanting it. As of this writing Mike has not yet recieved the script (that's how recent this news is) so that strip will undoubtedly not be appearing before this fall or winter.

Mike has quite an artistic range, as he can draw superheroes or horror with equal effectiveness. The back cover of *RBCC #117* was accomplished largely by Mike imitating Wrightson as he used a Wrightson pencil drawing owned by a local fan as the base, traced the central figures and inked them, and then added the entire background. I then had Mike sign both names himself to identify the art.

Mike's artistic career is really starting to move. I predict that a year from now what Mike has already done will appear minor compared to what he will have achieved by then. What do you think?



Copyright Marvel Comics Group

SMASH
JESUS!!
WHERE IS THE OWNER OF THIS COMPANY?/ THE ONE CALLED DRAKE?
WHERE?
H..HE AIN'T HERE, I SWEAR IT/ HE JUST WENT DOWN FOR HIS CAR TWO MINUTES AGO!..BUT,..WHAT..
..DO YOU WANT...NGHH!!
THWUMP!
GOOD MORNING MR.DRAKE! HAVE A SAFE DRIVE, SIR!
MORNIN' RILEY/ EXPECT ME BACK ABOUT TWO/

EDWARD DRAKE ?!
OWNER OF DRAKE SHIPPING LINES ?!
BASH
YOUR SHIPS ARE GUILTY OF DUMPING WASTES INTO THE DOMAIN OF PRINCE NAMOR !
YOUR WEALTH MAY BEND LAWS ON THE SURFACE WORLD, BUT PRINCE NAMOR IS LORD OF THE SEVEN SEAS! THUS DOES THE SUB-MARINER BECOME LAW!
WHEN AGAIN ONE OF YOUR SHIPS SPILLS WASTES INTO THE SEA, IT WILL BE DESTROYED!
THE WARNING IS GIVEN !
THE CHOICE IS YOURS!
ABIDE BY THE LAW..
"...OR PAY ITS PRICE!"
Finis

An Interview With—

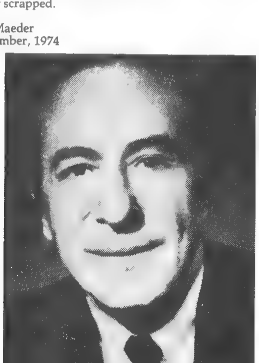
JOHN GOLDWATER, LEONARD DARVIN, & DR. FREDRIC WERTHAM

CONDUCTED BY JAY MAEDER

The following conversations with John Goldwater, Leonard Darvin and Dr. Fredric Wertham, taped in early October, were part of a data-gathering effort that led to a Miami Herald profile of today's comics industry. The reader is reminded that the approach to these conversations was straight press, as opposed to fan press.

Goldwater's remarks are abridged from a larger body; both the Darvin and Wertham transcripts are virtually verbatim, though Wertham's penchant for speaking in non sequiturs may suggest that whole passages have been wantonly scrapped.

Jay Maeder
December, 1974



JOHN GOLDWATER
PRESIDENT OF THE COMICS CODE AND OWNER OF ARCHIE COMICS.

For the record, what is the Comics Magazine Association and how does it function?

The Comics Magazine Association consists of publishers, national distributors, engravers and printers who are concerned with the handling of comic magazines. The Association is headed by an independent authority, the Code administrator. He is in charge of screening all comic magazines published and the Code seal is put on a magazine only after it is approved by the administrator. He is completely independent of any publisher.

There is a published Code of Ethics which the administrator abides by. Now, from time to time, there may be some questions of borderline material, both in editorial and in advertising. This is thrashed out between the administrator and the publisher. The publisher has the right of appeal, but in no case that I can remember in the twenty years that the Code has been in existence has anybody appealed.

So the Code administrator is practically the czar of the industry.

The Code is the most stringent of any code in the media. We don't have anything like the motion pictures have, R, X, anything like that, you know, because we appeal to a different segment of the population and each publisher is conscious of the responsibility that he has to the readers, who range in age, I would say, from seven to fourteen or fifteen. This is the age which comprises the greatest reading group. We do have some readership in colleges, we have some readership among adults, but the bulk of the readership is between seven and fifteen.

And the view is that this group's reading material requires a regulatory authority.
Definitely, definitely. We're very conscious of that.

The Code was devised for a specific set of circumstances at a specific period of time. A number of publishers went out of business as a direct result of the Code, which, considering some of their material, was probably just as well...
Well, it's just like any other business. You know, for example...let me take the dress business, you know? When a manufacturer gets a hot number out, all of his competitors copy it in all different price ranges. For example, he may put a dress out, say, for fortynine ninetyfive. His competitors, you know, copy it and they put it out for thirtynine, twentynine, all the way down maybe to nine ninetyfive. And the same thing happened in that period in the comic book business. For example, if Archie was successful, which it was, we had fifty competitors. Superman was successful. He had a hundred competitors. Then people said, we want to get into something different, and they started to get into this horror and terror thing, you see.

And the trouble was, in those days you could into business on a shoestring. A fellow with a couple of thousand

dollars would go to a printer and get credit and go to the paper people and get credit and he'd start a publication. And because of the great success of the comic book business a lot of people went into it who had no more idea how to publish a comic book than I had of, uh, being a shoemaker, you know?

So this was the reason for the fallout when the Code was established. These fellows just couldn't comply with the Code, the distributors wouldn't handle their magazines because they wouldn't comply with the Code, so therefore they had to go out of business. Which was a very helpful thing to the industry.

Of course there were broad implications. The Code put the shoestring publishers out of business but it also put E.C. out of business.

Well, let me tell you something. I made E.C. a millionaire. E.C. had a magazine called Mad, and Gaines, Bill Gaines, who was part of the Association at that time, felt that he couldn't go along with the Code of Ethics. Therefore he left the Association, enlarged the size of his magazine and became very successful. So the Code did him a wonderful turn. Justice was served in his case. I think he's very thankful. As a matter of fact he calls me from time to time and says to me, Goldwater, you're the guy who made me rich.

Yeah, he must be very grateful.

He's a brilliant fellow, I must say.

One publisher in particular has always refused to have anything to do with the Code. I wonder what the Association's feeling toward the Gold Key Line is today.

Well, they're not much of a factor any more, and I think the reason they're not much of a factor is that they don't belong to the Association, therefore they don't know what goes on in the Association. They are not privy to information the Association gets from advertisers or from other sources that bring them revenue. For example, foreign revenue, reprint revenue. So I think it's their own fault. We feel that they didn't have enough concern for the public good to join the Association, and I condemn them for that.

Their expressed attitude has always been, well, all our material is above reproach to begin with, we consider a personal affront to be required to submit our...

That's precisely the reason they should have joined the Association. Because Archie is just as wholesome as they are. And from time to time we've looked at their books and we've found some things that the Code wouldn't accept.

This is a very false and phony argument, that they're above and beyond the rest of the public. You know, this is ridiculous. If they had the public good in mind, if they were conscious of their responsibilities, they would have joined us. And if they felt we were doing something wrong they could come to our meetings and say well look fellas, here, we don't go along with this kind of stuff, why don't we change it. But they didn't have the sense of responsibility and I condemn them for that very severely.

How did it come to pass that the strictures of the Code were let down somewhat a few years ago?

I...this is not an easy question to answer. Frankly, I was opposed to the change. When you say a let-down...I don't know that that's a good phrase to use.

The Code was revised, amended.

Yes, it was revised. I must say this, I go along with the revisions. Kids today are much more sophisticated today than they were when I was a kid. The general mores of the entire country are changed. Our thinking has changed. Look what's on television today. You know. We have the most sensitive subjects brought to us in the family living room. I think that the slight revisions that we made in the Code was just a general attitude concerning the mores that are prevalent in the country today. Wouldn't you agree with that?

Sure I would. The next question would be, considering this sophistication and permisiveness, is it conceivable that the Code would be relaxed any further?

Well, no, I don't think so. Not a single publisher has asked for any further relaxation. They seem to be very satisfied with it. And let me make this point, and make it particularly so: the Code really has influenced artists and publishers to do a much better job, because they have to do their work within the confines of the Code. Therefore, what has happened is they do a lot more thinking about it, you know? They've become a great deal more creative. Today I think you'll find in a great many of the comic books subjects which are in the general news every day. For example, drugs, you know, narcotics. Everything except sex. That's out. That's out. But we can talk about drugs and we can talk about them in a very constructive manner.

For example, I personally did two stories on drugs. But the way I did it, I did it in a semihumorous manner. Where Archie and Jughead saw somebody throw a package into a trash can and out of curiosity they picked it up and as they picked it up two plainclothesmen picked THEM up and said haha, we gotcha, boys, took them to the stationhouse and they found the packages were heroin. But they explained the situation and in the course of the story itself the sergeant, or the lieutenant, I don't recall explained the dangers of drugs, you see, so that's how we did the story. And of course Archie's father came along and so forth and so on and the whole thing turned out to be a lesson in why teenagers shouldn't bother with drugs. We got a lot of letters from parents.

We also took a position on the Vietnam war, for example. I don't know if you read that story.

'uh, must have missed that one.

The story concerned the fact that Archie and Jughead were drafted. And as they were walking into the center there are a lot of these hippies outside saying, hey you guys, don't go in there, burn up your draft cards. So Archie and Jughead turn around and say, well! Look, we were ordered by our government to report and we're going to report. Look, we don't care about this war any more than you do. But! We're going to work within the law to see if we can change it. And that was the whole point, these fellows say to them, oh, you're these guys who say our country right or wrong. You believe that sort of thing. So Archie says, well, he says, when our country's right it's right, when it's wrong it's wrong, he says. Let me tell you something, after we go in and we're inducted and so forth...when we come out, we're going to lead a peace march!! You see? So that the whole point of the story was that when the government orders you to do something, don't defy the government, but go in and do it and then try to change the law in the way you think it ought to be changed, you see?

Right. Getting back to the Code...is it your feeling that currently some of the publishers are pushing those confines you mentioned just about as far as they can go?

I would go along with that. There's fierce competition among the publishers...I don't think we have any competition, you know, Archie itself, but some of the other publishers, I'll agree to the fact that they do push and go to the borderline. But I must say that the Code administrator is very adamant on that subject and he's very careful to see to it that the material that he considers borderline shouldn't be published. He refuses to accept it.

The administrator, I note, has been permitting profanity to go through lately.
Oh, has he. I didn't know that. I wasn't aware of...would you give me some examples?

Miscellaneous damns and hells, principally.
Oh...are you opposed to that?

Nah.
Because I hear that on television. I wouldn't be opposed to that. But one thing we do talk about in our meetings and that's grammar. We try to, in sentence construction, have proper grammar. In some stories, I don't know, maybe they have a hillbilly or something, but most publishers, I think, adhere to the fact that good grammar is used.

What is likely to occur at a typical association meeting?
Well, the Code administrator many times talks about the type of thing you just mentioned. The fact that sometimes one or two publishers may be pushing a little too hard. And he cautions them and warns them that this kind of material will be refused. We also discuss various aspects of distribution. Distribution is a tremendous problem, not only in the comic book business but in the entire magazine industry, because each town, each big city, has a monopoly. You know, there's one wholesaler in that city and he has no competition. And sometimes it's difficult to get your magazine on sale. And how do you handle it? For example, if you send the wholesaler a thousand copies we would hope that he would put out a thousand copies. Some of them only put out seven hundred and you have three hundred returns that never see the light of day. This is a very common and very difficult problem.

Could you assess for me, given your position as president of the Association, to what extent do you control the comic book industry?
The only thing I control is my own company.

You wield no sphere of presidential influence?
Not at all. The publishers have been through twenty years of this and I think they're fully cognizant and conscious of what should and what shouldn't be in their magazines. In the early days I used to go around speaking at various associations and explaining our position. I don't think it's necessary any more. Each publisher has a responsibility which is up to him to fulfill.

In terms, then, of quote unquote power, that belongs to Mr. Darvin and not to yourself.
Definitely. He has the power.

Let's talk about the Archie line. You've always been fond of describing Archie as the world's biggest square: obviously this is his appeal. I think circulation figures year after year reflect that Archie remains the top selling title in America. To what do you attribute the continuing success of this material?
I think it has to do with believability. I created these characters myself and they live within me, you know what I mean? As far as I'm concerned they actually exist. And we get at least a hundred phone calls each week from people who want to meet Archie or meet Betty or meet Veronica or Jughead, where can we see them, are they present...

That probably has a lot to do with their being on TV.
Possibly. But I think it's a question of believability of relationship. Most kids today hang out...uh, when I say hang out I mean enjoy going to...the soda shop. And that's where Archie and his pals go, they meet in the soda shop. So there's a definite identification between the reader and the characters, because they know that some of the problems Archie has in school happen to them. The things that happen to Archie happen to the readers.

We're talking, of course, in terms of the fact that your audience is a younger audience.
Well, we have some college audience but I would say that our average audience ranges eleven and a half, twelve. That is the major market.

Historically the Archie line hasn't been terribly successful whenever it has strayed from the overtly teenage material into other areas.
That is correct.

Recently you introduced your red circle line and I wonder how successful that has been for you.
It's a little too early to assess that, but I agree with you wholeheartedly that...I guess the thinking stems from the top and my thinking has always been along the clean wholesome sort of thing, and whenever we try to get into the adventure stuff we just don't seem to be able to hit it off too well. I don't know whether this Red Circle line will be successful or not.

How are the early returns?
Well, the early returns look like we're just about breaking even. We may introduce one or two new magazines in that field to see if we can introduce some innovative ideas. Whether or not we'll be able to do it, I don't know.

I guess the bottom line is how seriously interested you are in developing markets other than the overtly teenage market.
I think we're very interested. We really started a digest line...that seems to be extremely successful, but of course these are the Archie characters...we're thinking of doing some magazine types, adventure stuff.

Black and White Stuff?
Yes, this seems to be a trend and we may put our foot in the water there. But actually what we're really expanding in is education. We're going into the remedial education field. That's where our next step is going to be.

How do you respond to criticisms that Archie is an anachronism and that, you know, most of today's kids have no idea what a chok'lit shop is?
We really haven't had any criticism along those lines. I might tell you that we have two Archie restaurants now...

Finis

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LEONARD DARVIN

Administrator of the Comics Code.

You succeeded that New York Magistrate...
Eventually, I came in more or less as a troubleshooter. I'm an attorney, I specialize in trade associations. Going all the way back to the National Recovery Administration. Judge Murphy stayed until 1956 and then we got Mrs. Guy Percy Trulock, who was the president of the New York Federation of Women's Clubs. She stayed until 1965 and then I was acting administrator and then I took over the whole thing in 1967.
Times have changed considerably since '54 and '55, haven't they?
Well, the Code was revised in 1971. It was a little more

flexible. In the matter of nudity we've relaxed a bit, although we don't allow the showing of any breasts or pubic areas. In the matter of...mainly, we've allowed vampires and werewolves, as long as they are done in the classic fashion.

"In the classic fashion" appears to be the operative phrase.

Well, before that we didn't permit it at all. To keep out the gore and scenes such as aroused a great deal of public anger at the time, where someone was cut up...thing of that sort, we don't allow that. But the macabre elements of these types of characters, since they've become so popular now, we permit that.

I believe this type of material is legitimate, as far as comics go, but I would be happier if there were fewer titles in that area than have developed as a result of the change. Because I think it creates a false impression of comics. We have three hundred titles, of which this represents only about twenty percent of the output. But somehow that would be the area that would be most apparent on the stands. It takes it out of proportion. Because obviously parents might be a little upset by that type of character. And I would be happier if they reduced to maybe fifteen or twenty titles in that area.

Is this a point that you try to make at meetings of the Association?

Not at meetings, no. I state this privately...you understand, this is an industry self-regulation program, and we're limited to enforcing the Code. If we attempted to limit the number of titles or areas of interest we'd probably be in violation of the anti-trust laws. And I would not, I have no power or would exercise any power authoritatively in that area. I do on questions within the area. In other words, I make them tone down the materials as far as the Code will allow and so on. But I can't tell people, look, don't put out this type of mystery stuff, we've got too much of it. I can't do that. That's entirely up to the publisher...It's a trend that I believe will probably fade out in time.

How for the record, does the Code authority function and will you assess the extent of your own power...to what extent you control the material that appears on the stands.

The Code is adopted by the industry itself through the board of directors. Once it's adopted the authority is in my hands to enforce it. Now they send the material here—that includes advertising and all the editorial material—before it's published. In accordance with the Code, we make changes. We have about forty provisions, and we enforce all of them. Actually, most of the revisions are made in the editorial offices: they can read the Code as well as I can. So we get it only where there is an accidental or intentional violation. And we make them change it. In that respect I have a lot of authority. At the present time I would say that about twenty-five percent of the books that come to us, including ads, are sent back for some type of revision. To tone down the gore, to tone down the sex or any matters that may indicate rape...we don't allow any indication of rape...indications of seduction may be allowed, but naturally no sexual scenes may be shown...or for example, with the advertising, a knife or a realistic gun. So I'd say we exercise a great deal of actual authority in controlling what goes into the book, but the basic adherence to the Code is done before we ever get it. Because they know damn well we're not going to approve it if they send it to us in extreme form.

But beyond the text of the Code we don't go. Of course there's always the question of interpretation. An editor may feel that...for example, a simple thing like illicit sex relations are not to be portrayed, sexual abnormalities are unacceptable...he may have a scene which he feels is not a violation and we may feel that it is. We make him change it. If he objects, he may take an appeal, although they haven't done that. Many times, of course, we talk it over with the editor, he'll call up and object to our ruling, and if he can show us any reasons or some compromise that would be fairly acceptable we accept it.

There have been occasions, have there not, when a given publisher has simply refused to accept the arbitration of your office and has issued the book without the seal of approval?

That has occurred only in two issues of Spiderman, just before we adopted the drug-addiction provision. Up until that point we had no provision covering drugs, because in 1954 when the Code was first adopted that was not a problem. When drugs became prevalent on the American scene, naturally the editors began to feel that they ought to get into that area, especially since comics were then emerging as a social commentary. I just felt that I didn't have the authority to permit any stories that dealt with this problem, even though it dealt with it in a proper fashion.

Well, we took this up at the board. In the meantime these people, they were good members, they were doing this story where this guy was under the influence of drugs, he jumps out the window, it's very clear that this is a drug story...I wouldn't permit it. They went ahead anyhow, but this was at a time when the board was discussing the matter and I felt it was a matter for the board to handle. Well, the board adopted a stringent narcotics provision, making sure that they would be presented in a very negative fashion to show that drug taking is a vicious habit, and the matter was settled, and Marvel went on and complied with it. The very interesting thing about all this is that, after all this furor, very few stories about drugs have appeared since.

This gets into an interesting area...even the revised Code, how satisfactory a tool do you find it? You know, are there circumstances where there simply aren't provisions to cover something that distresses you for one reason or another...or conversely, are you sometimes required to object to

something that, in its context, you wouldn't otherwise object to?

Well, that's a good question. Number one: I have the authority under General Standard Part C, which states all elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the Code and are considered violations of good taste and decency shall be prohibited. Now, this is a provision I rarely use, because I feel it gives me too much license. It gives very little notice to the writer or the editor. But I can use it, and that's number one.

I feel that the Code, as revised, taking into account contemporary standards, is sufficient to protect the children. I mean, let me make this point: I am against censorship, generally, I'm against it for adults. Any type of reading for adults. The only reason I'm concerned with the Code and the industry is that comics, no matter how much they're read by adults, basically they're a children's medium. And unfortunately, competition, even though there are fewer publishers now than there were when we started, and they're all responsible firms, competition would tend to make them go one step further than the other. And, in effect, children would be exploited. And the net result would be, first that children would be subjected to material that society seems to agree is not good for them to be exposed to and, secondly, protect the industry against the kind of thing, say, that you have in West Virginia where, rightly or wrongly, these people are actually going out on strike against some books that are used in schools. Well of course, we're not textbooks, but the argument there is not textbooks but that they're being used for children.

So we're protecting the industry, and I feel that these are minimum standards, and should be as miniumum as possible, and we interpret them that way. I don't stoop to pick up pins. If a girl wears a bikini that's an eighth of an inch too small, unless it shows her pubic hair I'll let it go. Because the kid can see that on the beach. Or profanity. We don't use the kind of four letter words that most media use today, you know, like S-H-I-T or F-U-C-K, but at one time we wouldn't allow damn or hell or even crud, and now we do. It was changed to say profanity, obscenities, smut vulgarities or words which have acquired undesirable meanings, judged and interpreted in terms of contemporary standards, are forbidden. Now, today those words are quite common and I don't think it could properly be ruled out.

What we try to do here, and I think this is the difference between enlightened self-regulation programs and say, governmental censorship or mob censorship, is that we try to enforce the Code reasonably for reasonable people. And we try not to squelch too much the creativity of the people who produce the comics. Which is the one thing that censorship is often condemned for, rightly so.

And this is a difficult problem, it's walking a tightrope, we can't please everybody. We catch hell from the editors on the one hand and we catch hell occasionally from the public. And you find generally that dyed-in-the-wool fans don't like the Code. They have given the Code many respressive aspects it just doesn't have.

So far as quote unquote repression goes, the Code was obviously created for a specific set of circumstances...in your own mind, by the way, is there any clearcut cause and effect between...you know, and I'm talking about 1952, 1953, the whole atmosphere of that period...was there in fact any cause and effect between comics and juvenile delinquency, as was alleged?

No. As a matter of fact I've studied the transcripts of the Senate Juvenile Delinquency Committee that caused all the furor. There's a whole book on this, where the committee staff sent letters to every district attorney in the United States, asking them if they felt that juvenile delinquency, in their experience with the kids that they picked up, was caused by reading the comics, if there was a cause and effect. And the answers were there. I can hardly think of one who said he could blame the juvenile delinquence cases that he had on comics reading.

The Wertham thing was completely biased because, although I don't condone some of the comics that were put out at the time, I think they were pushing it way out, they were combining sex and crime and horror in one book and that was a little too much, but they only represented about, even then, not more than twenty percent of the output. But they were the ones that gave comics as a whole a bad name. But scientific tests have shown...there...Wertham used a very simple technique. At that time comics were even more popular than they are today. I mean, there were over six hundred titles and every kid read comics and...when they brought a kid into this clinic he had there in Harlem one of the first questions they asked was if he read comics, and he said yes. Well, he could have asked him did you have breakfast this morning and therefore breakfast caused juvenile delinquency. It was not a scientific approach.

But in actual terms of experience by prosecutors, by people involved in dealing on the court level, absolutely, the evidence was to the contrary.

In any case, I think it would be fair to say there was a very palpable air of hysteria to that whole period.

Yes there was.

And this is something you must constantly attempt to live down.

Exactly. Right. You see, the general feeling would seem to be, well, this is twenty years ago and times are different now. Well, they ARE different...but the concern of parents with what their children read is no different, as evidenced by

this situation in West Virginia, by the fact that there's a very powerful movement now to restrict advertising for children on television...so the concern of parents is just as strong today as it was then.

Fortunately, the focus is not on comic books, because we've kept them in bounds. And we have. I think we've done a very good job on that score. We certainly get very few complaints.

On the other hand, the fans feel that we have unduly held back comic books. That's wrong, because during the same period that the Code was even of a more restrictive nature than it is now, the so-called Second Golden Age of Comics came up. Fantastic Four, Spiderman, Conan. These are the very hot numbers today, and these were all developed under the Code. And the very same people that attack the Code call this the second Golden Age of Comics.

Contemporary standards being what they are, do you anticipate any further relaxation of the code?

Well, it's possible. A lot of it is in interpretation. I think the provisions themselves are...I don't know what you could...well, there are a few things you could change. For example, we had a letter from a young man who said that our provision on divorce was not in keeping with the times. It says divorce shall not be treated humorously nor represented as desirable.

Now, I thought that was a pretty good point. I don't think it should be treated humorously, because as a lawyer I can tell you it's a pretty traumatic experience, but whether it's desirable...hell, I think it's desirable if two people hate each other, what else are you going to do?

Unfortunately I've never had a chance to see a story...because in that romance line everything is hunkydory, you seldom have a divorce...but if there was I would be inclined to question this provision.

So I can see where changes could and will be made. Mainly it's a matter of attempting to interpret it in the light of contemporary standards. That's why it can't be done by a computer, it's got to be done by an individual, whether it's me or someone else, who on the one hand feels a responsibility to the public, on the other hand wants to see the industry prosper and not get behind the times.

Contemporary standards reflect a tolerance of violence, I think, yet even the hard core fans themselves have been objecting lately to the violence they allege pervades such features as The Spectre and Deathlok the Demolisher.

Yes. Yes.

Have you views on either of these features or the larger issue that...

Well, you know, I'm in a hell of a spot to give you an opinion on any one of our titles. The Spectre and Deathlok are in the areas that I think we have to watch very closely, and I personally, the books that come through on those, I can't give you a personal opinion. I don't like every book we get. That does not go only for these two titles necessarily, it goes for a number of others. And I very much like other titles.

But this is something I can't talk about. I go according to theCode, the same as a judge sits there and there is a guy in front of him and this guy looks like a mean bastard and he believes he ought to go to jail, but the facts before him don't justify that he lets him go. This is the point I'm making, this is a matter of individual choice. If any one of these books violates the Code we make them change it, but we can't tell them, now look, I don't like this whole thing. That's their business.

Let me phrase the...

I have no private opinions.

Put it this way, let's take Deathlok specifically. Of the three issues of that book that have hit the stands to date, has your office found it necessary to send any one of them, or parts of any one of them, back to the publisher? In the product...

Yeah, I'm trying to tell you that this is confidential. We do not disclose to even any other publisher what correction we have ordered. This is something between us and the publisher. It's confidential from the very president of the Association. No one knows what we do in regard to each individual book.

...Okay, I guess we don't talk about specific titles.

Well, it's a good question, but I can't answer it. I'm not authorized to.

Let's talk about Gold Key. What is your position regarding Gold Key's persistent refusal to have anything to do with the Code?

Well, I feel very strongly about it. I've stated that publicly and to them, I know them quite well...and, incidentally, they attempt to follow the Code, when we made the revisions they wrote for five copies and they were even willing to contribute to it...but they make the asinine statement that since they feel their material doesn't need revision they don't want to send it in. I feel that if the other publishers who put out non-controversial material made the same point, there could be no Code.

The point is, the purpose of the Code, and Senator Kefauver made that point when the Code was adopted, he said if the good publishers stay out and only the controversial publishers come in, then the Code seal has no meaning, as a matter of fact it has a very contrary meaning. If the Code seal is to mean anything it's to appear on good clean comics, no matter what the type.

So in that sense I feel very strongly that Gold Key has hurt the Code tremendously and hurt the industry, because if other publishers followed their lead...fortunately they haven't, but I wouldn't be surprised if sooner or later some publisher comes along and says hell, if Gold Key can get away with it why can't I...I'll lay you a private bet that, if the Code is abolished, within a year you will have some material going to kids that you wouldn't believe. Because people who were not interested in comics would come into it.

When the Code was first conceived it amounted virtually to extortion, in the sense that the whole point was, okay, these are going to be Code-approved books, and if a publisher does not subscribe to the Code he won't be able to distribute his books, we will instruct the distributors to refuse to handle...

That's not quite true. The distributors are independent people and...

They belong to the Association.

The national distributors do, but the effective people are the wholesalers in each town. We have no control of them. And we have never, other than urging them to look for the seal, we have never used any pressure at all to...

I was under the impression that when the Code authority was first formed that was one of the very explicit points that...

No, no. That was...it was in effect something like that, because what happened was that the wholesalers just wouldn't handle comics, they had been burned in their community. Literally. Some of them were burned in public squares. And they saw it as protection for...

Anyway, the Gold Key titles have no distribution problems whatever the line is, while not quite the publishing

stronghold it was, say, twenty-five years ago, it remains a pretty sound operation.

Yes it is, and on the whole their material may be okay, although some of the ads we wouldn't approve. Sure, they're a strong company, and that's why they owe a responsibility to the industry to join it. And...I believe they're hurting the public and the industry, because sooner or later something's got to give on that. Because they're too large to be out. But there's no force we can use.

One last question, addressing itself somewhat to your private views, and to render it answerable I'll pose it very generally. Your responsibility, as you describe it to me, is solely to affirm the social acceptability of a particular book, as opposed to passing judgement on its literary merit...although surely after some twenty years of reading several hundred comics per month you have to have formed some views regarding the overall quality of the fare. And I wonder if you can tell me just what is your general impression of the kinds of comic material available to the comic buying audience today.

My feeling is this, and I tell you sincerely: comics today are, from the art standpoint, so far superior to anything before that I'm really proud of many of the artists and many of the books. From the visual standpoint we're putting out a very high form of art. And, on the whole, comics are much more literate, the stories more cogent...I'd say that at least seventyfive percent of the comics, for mass literature, is more exciting than any other form of children's literature.

Now, this is not Dickens, not Shakespeare...from the literary level, qualified by mass literature, I think it's good reading matter for kids as a whole. The most exciting form of children's literature, no question about it, and most of the titles are certainly equal to anything seen on television...

Finis

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DR. FREDRIC WERTHAM

You were rather instrumental in creating the conditions that led to the development of the Code.

Look, I am a psychiatrist. I primarily work in mental hygiene clinics, out patient departments...usually in free ones. I was director of the mental hygiene clinic in Hopkins, I was the director of the biggest mental hygiene clinic in the United States, at Bellevue Hospital in New York, and I founded the first integrated psychiatric clinic in the ghetto area, Harlem, in New York. This is by way of background, how I got into this, you see.

Now I am not primarily interested in comic books, but I am interested in people. And it turned out, in these clinics, many of our patients were young people. This goes back to the middle '40s. Now, in the course of examining these kids, I saw all kinds of troubled young people. They were not necessarily delinquents, they were not necessarily sick, but they had learning difficulties or home difficulties or reading difficulties and so on. My point of view in psychiatry is that one cannot help a person unless one knows the circumstances in which he lives, in detail...it was brought to me by these kids that outside influences have an enormous influence, namely the mass media. And we found out that quite a number of these kids had these comic books sticking out of their pockets. My assistants started drawing my attention to this.

We found, for instance that among the many different factors that affect a child, the depiction of crime, of violence, of murder, or rape, of explosion, of destruction... has an effect on them. Now, I was very much interested in violence. I've studied violence and I have written several books about it, I've testified in court, I've lectured police departments. In the course of that we came to the conclusion that this has an effect on children.

Now, I never said, and I don't think it is so, that a child reads a comic book and then goes out a beats up his sister or commits a holdup.

You were not maintaining that there was a clearcut cause and effect relationship?

You see, in human life, in psychological life, it isn't so that you can say one factor has a clear causal effect on anything else. It's not like a billiard ball hitting a billiard ball. This is a web of circumstances...any factor that is detrimental is only so in connection with other factors. It isn't so that the comic book, or whatever it is, the movies, alone does it. All I think, it has an effect.

Then your conclusions have been misrepresented all these years.

Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. But I mean, look, this is an industry that...I had no idea at that time that I was doing any harm to any industry. I give you an example: if I am interested in air pollution it doesn't mean that I am interested in any specific factory. I was just saying that these outside influences have a definite influence. And I can give you in one word what this influence is: it desensitizes these kids. They're not sensitive any more to human suffering, they become hard.

Regardless of what your intentions were, Doctor, I think it would be fair to say that your book had an explosive effect on both the industry and on social order.

Yeah, well, that is true. It had an enormous number of reviews and so on. But the point is, you know what the effect was primarily: that for the first time these parents looked at these comic books themselves. You know, I also thought comic books were filled with rabbits and animals and nice fairy stories. But then I read them and I thought...why, these girls have needles stuck in their eyes, and baseball games are played with the human head, and, crimes are depicted, and blood flows... I don't know that, you see?

So then the kids came to us and we made a very extensive scientific study by...a child would tell us his dream, and he uses as his excuse...and we say, well, what about these comic books? And he says well, I bring them to you. So he brought us his comic books and we got an enormous collection of comic books.

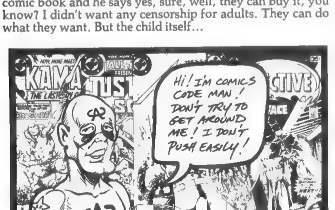
And I predicted then that since violence is connected with so many other things that more and more young children will commit violence. I said that in 1947. Now at that time it was, ach, that's ridiculous, a boy of fourteen to

commit murder, it was absolutely unknown. I had never seen a murderer of fourteen. Nowdays you speak to a police department and they suspect the fifteen, sixteen, fourteen year old boys. Absolutely. What I predicted then has not only come true, but absolutely true. But in those days it was unheard of. Well, I based it not specifically on comic books, I never did, but on all the mass media.

Now, I had in the beginning no idea of advocating any methods whatever, I regarded it just from the point of view of treating people, as a scientific...but then I got so much objection and so much criticism and so much attack, you see...I tell you what happened: when my book came out I found out that I was being followed by detectives. There were two detectives who spent about six weeks, they asked everyone who knew me, asked my friends and they even went to my patients, and they asked what is Dr. Wertham's sex life, does he like girls, does he like boys, what car does he drive, does he pay his taxes, does he drink...it was very funny.

Now, I had no intention of suggesting any methods but finally, when I was asked off and on by responsible people, what do you really suggest should be done, then I made a suggestion. And this is very important, it had absolutely nothing to do with the Code, I suggested that children the age of thirteen or under, that comic books...I never spoke of comic books, but a crime is a crime, if you kill a girl it's a crime, so I had the category of crime comic books. And all I said was that children of thirteen should not, that comic books should not be directly displayed to them, that's all. In other words it should not be so that a boy of twelve goes into a store and sits there and sees all these things. I said, they should not be directly displayed to the child.

Now, if the papa or the mama goes to the bookstore and says please, have you any comic books, I want to show them how you can kill a girl, they only know how to strangle them and I want to show them that you can stab them from the back or you can take their liver out, have you got a comic book and he says yes, sure, well, they can buy it, you know? I didn't want any censorship for adults. They can do what they want. But the child itself...



Of course you have been closely identified with censorship over the years.

Well, I tell you this, this was partly a deliberate misrepresentation. The comic book industry, apart from following me with detectives...I'm afraid my life was not interesting enough. I didn't have any Argentinian firecrackers jumping out of my car. They didn't find enough, you know, I'm almost ashamed...but one of the biggest public relations firms in the country had the task of making all these things up deliberately.

Your critics include the current administrator of the code, who declares that there was absolutely no cause and effect

SO HOW YOU KNOW, FRIENDS NOW YOU KNOW WHY THERE IS A BALL GAME BEING PLAYED IN THE MOONLIGHT AT MIDNIGHT IN THE DESERTED CENTRAL CITY BALL PARK. LOOK CLOSELY! SEE THIS STRANGE BASEBALL GAME? SEE THE LONG STRANDS OF PULPY INTESTINES THAT MARK THE BASE LINES. SEE THE TWO LUMPS AND THE LIVER THAT INDICATE THE BASES...THE HEART THAT IS HOME PLATE. SEE DOC WHITE RISE AND WITH THE HEART WITH THE MANLY SCALP, YELLING
PLAY BALL... LET'S GO PHILLY, DON'T BATTER UP! PITCH IT IN
SEE THE BATTER COME TO THE PLATE SWINGING THE LEGS, THE ARMS, THEN THROWING ALL BUT ONE AWAY AND STANDING IN THE BOX WAITING FOR THE PITCHER TO HURL THE HEAD IN TO HIM. SEE THE CATCHER WITH THE TORSO STRAPPED ON AS A CHEST PROTECTOR, THE INFIELDERS WITH THEIR HAND-WITH...THE STOMACH-ROSIN-BAG, AND ALL THE OTHER PIECES OF EQUIPMENT THAT ONCE WAS CENTRAL CITY'S STAR PITCHER, HERBIE SATTEN..

ever demonstrated between comics and aberrant juvenile behavior...I wonder, are you still convinced of the legitimacy of your theories, have you revised or...

I am much more convinced. Look, all these things...I mean, I have nothing to do with the Code, I don't know the administrator...but the point is, to say that, that's a very very serious thing. You know, cause and effect is big word. Look, a patient comes to me and he has a headache, yes? Now, shall I wait till I only find out a strict absolutely cause and effect or shall I find out whether he smokes too much or drinks too much? I mean, I think of all the factors. Lots of people are exposed to...comic books are now a minor medium. They're not so important any more. The important media now are television and movies. And the movies of course are filled, filled with violence. Filled. I mean, this last movie, Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia, twentyone people are killed in that.

Now, the question of cause and effect. Let's discuss that. what is cause? A cause means anything that has an influence pn people. The mass media, they obviously have an influence for good or for bad. And if you show a lot of violence then finally people get used to it and the results are... after all, the violence among young people is tremendously increased. And why should that happen? There must be some influence. And I say that mass media are one, one of the important factors. And the people say there is no cause and effect? That seems to me to be utterly unscientific. How can anyone be a psychiatrist and not realize that people get affected by things?

There is one other thing they say about me, that I am for censorship. You've heard that, probably.

Well, Yeah...

Now, I am the first psychiatrist in the United States who was admitted in a federal court as an expert witness against censorship. I've defended nudist magazines, I've always been on the side against censorship. There is not one case where I have been for censorship.

Then you feel you've been subject to character assassination all these years?

That's a mild expression, yes. Look, don't get me wrong, I'm not in any way bitter. I think it's quite funny. You know, I've been accused of practicing everything except lesbianism.

They never accused me of that. How they missed out on that, I don't know.

What are your current professional circumstances, especially with regard to comics? You have been involved in a study of fanzines...

My professional circumstances are primarily psychiatry and psychotherapy, I have a big psychotherapy practice. I'm still working on violence. I have nothing to do with comic books any more, but I'm very much interested in movies. People sent them to me and I got interested...and I got a very interesting collection of these amateur magazines. These are magazines that, to my mind, are very important, although nobody pays attention to them. In the sense that they are completely free from censorship. These are magazines that a young man gets out by himself, nobody interferes with it, he sends it to people who want it. Outside the profit motive. So I collected them. You see, I am interested in communication because that has to do with violence. Men who rape, you see, that is the opposite of communication. If he communicated with a girl, you see, he wouldn't have to kill her.

Okay.

So I got interested and finally I wrote a book about it. The only book that has ever been written on fanzines. It's published by Southern Illinois University Press. Fanzines are very nice. They don't have any violence. They're quite different. In other words a man can be a comic book reader...they make me out to be a terrific fanatic. I'm not at all. I mean, there are people who resist that. You see, I believe in human beings. I believe that human beings have an enormous resistance and there are many of them who resisted these bad influences. They ask me to write for them, I've written for a number of fanzines. Because I'm praising them, you see. There has been a rumor around that I'm against fanzines, I'm against everything ... the point is that I've discovered fanzines and I think they're absolutely very important and they give me a very good feeling about young people today.

I had wondered to what extent you were still involved with studying comics because I was curious what your professional opinion is of comic material today, twenty years after the Code was adopted.

Two things have to be said. In the first place, I can't talk... you see, when I spoke about comic books in those days, I knew, I mean, these kids brought me all their comic books and the crime comic books that were, there were so many...

TARLTON STOPPED BELOW HIS GLEAMING ROCKET
OF COURSE THERE'S ROOM FOR YOU, MY FRIEND. FOR A WHILE, ON EARTH, IT SEEMED LIKE THERE WAS NO HOPE? TO LIVE BUT WHEN WINNING ON EARTH LEARNED TO LIVE TOGETHER, REAL PROGRESS FIRST BEGAN! THE UNIVERSE WAS SUDDENLY SURE
AND WHEN WE LEARN
THE UNIVERSE WILL BE YOURS TOO. GOOD-BYE, MY FRIEND!
GOOD-BYE, TARLTON.
THE SHIP ROARED UP INTO THE NIGHT SKY. IT SOARED INTO THE INFINITE VOID OF SPACE, INTO THE ENDLESS SOBBING VACUUM IT HOARED TOWARD SOMEONE EARTH...
AND AS DID THE SHIP THE MAN REMOVED HIS SPACE HELMET AND SHOOK HIS HEAD, AND THE INSTRUMENT LIGHTS MADE THE BEADS OF PERSPIRAT ON ON HIS DARK SKIN TWINKLE LIKE DISTANT STARS

now I haven't got such a complete overview. My impression is that the worst kinds of things, I don't think you see anybody any more sticking a needle in a girl's eye, you don't see any where they play with human intestines... see, the interesting thing is, these atrocities, I was the first, I was the only one who pointed it out. Nobody had spoken out when I began to speak about it. Nobody... I was all wrong, you see. The first time I ever spoke about comic books at all, I was under oath in Washington D.C. in a case where I was against censorship. That was a very difficult trial before the Post Office, in 1947. And I was an expert psychiatrist testifying for the defense. And in cross examination the man said to me, in other words, you think all publications are all right and nothing is wrong. And I said no, I don't think so at all, I have in my briefcase a lot of things that, all right, here, if you want them, here's the evidence. And they were absolutely horrified. Here was blood all over, here was every kind of murder you can think of, here were men who were, their noses were cut off, their eyes were, blood, the judge said doctor where did you get this kind of, I said, your honor, I bought those on the corner, you can go right there and buy some too.

I can't tell you all the rotten things they said. They said when a boy is in trouble and he comes to Dr. Wertham's clinic he's asked do you read comic books. And if he said yes, the comic books made me commit a crime, then Dr. Wertham believed that. No single child has ever accused comic books. None. They never said that. WE said it. Look, I don't ask a boy when he has the measles, where do you get your measles from.

If a child goes to a movie what's he supposed to see, Chinatown? Horrible, horrible, blood spurting all over and of course they think this is...

Real life, yes.

It IS real life. That's the trouble.

Comics have gained more and more legitimacy in recent years, they've become valuable tools in remedial education. All in all it's a far cry from the legitimacy level of twenty years ago.

I have to tell you this. That comic books are used in remedial reading and so on, that's completely wrong. They're very bad for reading. That's been very carefully studied. There have been important scientific studies made. They're NOT good for reading. I get letters from comic-oriented people and they're always full of bad spelling.

Comic books are not good for reading because in reading you have to read from left to right. But in a comic book you have these balloons. And they interfere with reading. So for remedial reading it's a very bad thing.

Yes, comics have become legitimate and I don't think it's a good sign for the cultural state of the nation. It would be better if people read books or newspapers...

Reprinted from RBCC #37

Dear G.B.,

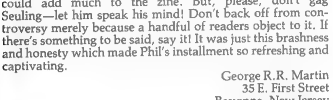
Although I miss, and will continue to miss, the brilliant writing of Rick Weingroff, RB*CC #35 was still undeniably a good issue. The cover surprised me—it was just fabulous— a piece of great art. Easily the best cover you've ever had since the merger, and rivaled only by the beautiful Buddy Saunders masterpieces that adorned the old *Rocket's Blast* before it.

Dave Bibby's excellent Plastic Man article served to make this issue an outstanding one to my mind. The writing was highly competent, the art was top drawer stuff, and the reproduction added icing to the cake. The electronic stencil method of yours seems to enhance anything and everything it's used on.

Paul Gambaccini's version of "Rocketeer Gossip" was highly interesting and exceptionally well written, but it just wasn't the same "RG" I've known and loved over the years. As a matter of fact, it seemed more like a serious version of (Bernie) Bubnis' "Spotlight on the Pros" series. Ah well, I expected it—Weingroff is inimitable. Anyway, Paul's column made good reading aplenty, which is really all that counts.

I, for one, would be glad to see "Seuling's Corner" become a regular feature—it is a fresh and original little thing and could add much to the zine. But, please, don't gag Seuling—let him speak his mind! Don't back off from controversy merely because a handful of readers object to it. If there's something to be said, say it! It was just this brashness and honesty which made Phil's installment so refreshing and captivating.

George R.R. Martin
35 E. First Street
Bayonne, New Jersey



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Dear G.B.,

Got *RB★CC #36* today—it's improved since I last saw it (#33). The cover was great and so were the reproductions throughout the ish. Phil Seuling's column is great—what a comedian. Gambaccini's "Rocketeer Gossip" was good. The visits to DC sound typical—I've been up there several times myself. The guy who conducts the tours is named Walter. Joe Giella has known him for 20 years and still doesn't know his last name. Walter is also the one who pastes the title-logos on the original art at D.C.

I was up at Schwartz's office once when Kanigher was there, and he only took *five* minutes to rake over Bails. Personally, I can do it much quicker. I agree with Kanigher about fandom being too organized—especially with the Academy. (*ED: I couldn't disagree more. I think a certain amount of organization is definitely needed, but you are entitled to your own opinion.*) Fandom isn't a high class organization devoted to literary geniuses or any such thing! It's a correspondence group where people with similar interests get to communicate with one another.

Most of the pro's at DC like Mort Meskin's art because of its simplicity. They feel it wouldn't be the same with a lot of detail, and feel that it's quite advanced *because* of its simplicity.

A lot of guys at DC read Marvel mags, especially Murray Boltinoff. In the office he shares with George Kashdan and

Jack Schiff, there's a pile of 'em in the corner. Boltinoff justifies this by saying that General Motors keeps an eye on what Ford does.

Seriously, Boltinoff is one guy who tries to please fandom. Both he and Kashdan try to cash in on some of the Marvel popularity in their books—some of which turn out quite well. I'm sorry that Paul didn't meet Murray—he's a real nice guy.

Ron Fradkin
33 Tinder Lane
Levittown, New York

Dear G.B.,

Ken Dixon's letter obviously didn't take into account the situation at Marvel. The fact is that not many artists (or writers) could follow the Marvel Manner. Unlike other companies, Marvel gives its artists only plot outlines—that is, a few paragraphs describing the entire story ("5 pages: Sub-Mariner swims to shore and challenges FF who launch retaliatory measures; 6 pages: Captain America joins the fray and together he and FF push Namor back to the sea, etc."), and from these outlines, the artist must construct the panels. He must be able to envision the dialogue, pace the story, include the characterization panels, plan comedy panels, and include excellent artwork in his repertoir.

Suggesting that Marvel get a new writer is like suggesting that Bob Haney take over the *Fantastic Four*—do you really think the FF, or any Marvel comic, would be the same without Lee as its writer? Perhaps the only man in the comic business who could match Lee's style is Joe Simon, who is busy as the editor of *Sick*.

Stan is continually taking on new staff members, such as Mike Demio, Wally Wood, Bob Powell, Larry Ivie (at least for one issue), and no doubt many shifts will be made in the years to come. But it is difficult for him to make a great many major changes in his lineup simply because of the type of comic which he produces.

As for Ken's suggestion that one comic feature, on a rotating basis, all the Marvel minor heroes, it is doubtful that Lee would even consider such a move. In the first place, he would replace a steady income from 4 or 5 mags with an income derived from one mag. In the second place, trying to feature so many heroes in one mag would cause each to lose spontaneity—that is, readers would have trouble remembering from issue to issue just what is what. And in the third place, some of the heroes which Ken suggests putting in this book have developed quite well on their own. For instance, Thor, Dr. Strange, Iron Man, and The Hulk are developing as unique heroes, each in his own right. Thor and Dr. Strange, within the format of the Marvel stereotype, have struck out in new directions for modern comics, the total effect being quite fine. Iron Man is perhaps the best of these heroes, combining excellent artwork, and standard powers, with Marvel characterization. The Hulk series has turned into one of the best cliffhangers in comic history. Putting these heroes into one comic would simply stifle the whole bunch.

But more importantly, Ken's argument fails because he has taken for granted that "most everyone" agrees that Marvel needs help. The sales figures show that Marvel is improving—expanding, getting larger. The fact that Stan is planning another new comic (according to *TCR*) should prove the point further. No business concern would put out another item if similar items are not selling well. And creatively, Marvel comics, stereotypes and all, are among the best comics produced today, though I wouldn't argue the point in a letter column if someone disagreed.

Rick Weingroff
3231 Southgreen Road
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear G.B.,

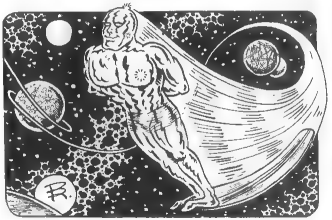
Just received *RB★CC #36*—comments: Cover by Keltner is probably his finest work to date. Very effective. Though the new logo is quite professional looking, I can't help but still favor the old "Rocket's Blast" depicting a rocket blasting; how about a vote on this?

Glad to see you are using so much green paper and electric stencil mimeo—these add a 'quality' appearance to the zine's overall value.

Personally, I think "Seuling's Corner" is somewhat verbose; one page of genuine goodies is better than two stretched with ludicrous verbiage. Phil's mention of Laser indicates he didn't see the Eclipse origin two years ago; the 'Midnight Marauder' carries—and utilizes—a laser beam weapon. Bless him (Seuling) for remembering Invisible Scarlet O'Neil, an almost forgotten favorite.

A very informative 'Rocketeer Gossip,' as is Gambaccini's usual. You are surely to be commended for your monumental efforts in reprinting the now "all sold out" *Alter-Ego #5, 6* and *7*, and *Masquerader #6*, as well as the lower print run *Fantasy Illustrated* and *Star Studded Comics*, since Comicdom has doubled—possibly tripled—just these past few months. It's gratifying that someone as dedicated as yourself cares enough about newcomers to our ranks to attempt such a task. Perhaps some of our earlier struggles will be more appreciated by those who take quality zines for granted.

Ronn Foss



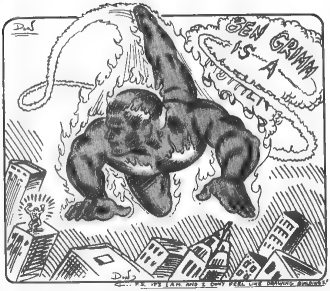
Reprinted from *RBCC #41* (1965)

Dear Gordon,

Just in case *RB★CC* was interested, I thought I might pass along the information that I am now employed by the Marvel Comics Group as more-or-less general assistant to Stan Lee, and staff writer. You doubtless know by now that I *was* employed by National Comics to replace Nelson Bridwell (who is now doing writing for various DC comics), however, I quit at the end of the first of two trial weeks for reasons of a personal nature.

After taking a writing test for Stan Lee, I was quite happy to receive an invitation to join the staff—first on some of the "teenage" titles such as *Millie The Model*, but soon on the super hero material as well. Naturally, this means that I will be unable to turn out any more stories for Charlton other than the one *Son of Vulcan* and one *Blue Beetle* that I have already done.

Meanwhile, I shall continue some activities (albeit restricted ones) as a fan—including publication of *Alter Ego*, at least partially because no other fan is publishing, just now, exactly the kind of fanzine which I personally want to see. All I ask is that I don't start receiving all sorts of requests to try to get plugs in the magazines for fannish publications; I



am, after all, just starting out with Marvel and hardly in a a position to influence policy.

In case you decide to print any of this letter, I hope you will include this last paragraph in which I'd like to thank the various fans whose encouraging words and congratualions since I sold my first script to Charlton have meant so much to me. I'm sorry that my new position will necessitate a drastic decrease in the amount of correspondence I can contribute; however, by cutting down on letter writing, I may be able to keep on publishing *AE* on my present three-a-year schedule.

Roy Thomas

(*EDITOR'S NOTE: I could not possibly be any happier for you, and I wish you the best of luck. I do hope, though, that you will be able to find time to keep in touch with us.*)

Reprinted from RBCC *#68* (1970)

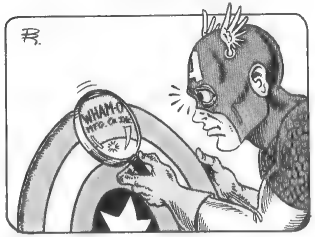
Dear G.B.,

What can I say? *RB&CC* had some of the best art, fan or pro, that I've ever seen. Robert Kline's cover sure was "E.C. Personified!!" What a magnificent piece of art! And the two pieces by John Richardson were very well done also. I especially liked his painting of the Spectre. It was not the most detailed piece of art I've ever seen, but it was beautifully atmospheric. For the first time, the ghostly quality of the Spectre was finally realized on paper. I am hoping to see more of these two artists in the future, as they are as good as many pros! In other words, get what you can out of them before they turn pro!!

Well, the results of the 1968 Alley Awards are in, and, for a large part, I'm disappointed. What happened was that too many Marvel fans answered the plug in the Bullpen pages and voted on a straight Marvel ticket, thus slanting it unjustly. How else would Sgt Fury beat Enemy Ace by 69 votes? How else would Stan Lee beat Dick Giordano by 185 votes? Granted, in a tally of strictly fandom, Lee still might have won (I voted for Giordano myself), but hardly by such a great margin. Lee also won by a tremendous (150 votes) amount in the best writer category. Of the fans I know, most agree Stan had an off year in '68. Here's another example: Joe Sinnott won best inker by 118 votes over Wally Wood. Granted, Joe did some fine work with Steranko and on the FF, but 1968 was Wood's year. His return to comics helped rejuvenate the whole DC line. Shouldn't the voting have been a bit closer? That shuck from Lee about 'King' Kirby enabled Jack to finish second in the best artist category—ahead of Neal Adams! I have nothing against Jack—he's a good artist, but not *that* great. Luckily, talent won out and Jim Steranko won almost everything in sight: Best Artist, Hall of Fame Award (for Nick Fury), numbers one, two, four and five of the Best Covers, fourth in the Best Writer, numbers four and five in Best Full Length story, numbers one and four in Best Short Story, plus the fact that the character Nick Fury finished quite high in several categories due to Steranko. Real talent will out! Mark says next year it'll be a straight fandom vote, which is good. Like you say in the *RB&CC*—Don't be a Marvel fan, don't be a DC fan, but be a comic fan. Look for quality, not Stan Lee's name. I wish more people would think that way when they cast their Alley vote.

Thanks for letting me air my views on the 1968 Alley Awards. Continued success to your zine. I especially like Rich Hauser's "EC Revisited" column.

Fred Hembeck
65 Frank Avenue
Yaphank, N.Y. 11980



Reprinted from RBCC #69

Dear Fred Hembeck and RB&CC:

Fred's letter in the last RB&CC (just out as I write this) stated his disappointment with the top-heavy Marvel vote in the 1968 Alley Award poll. His viewpoint has, I suppose, its merits; however, it was so steeped in misconceptions that I had to take typewriter in hand...in an unofficial capacity, of course. Why I do this, I'm not quite sure. Certainly Marvel—whether winning or losing—has nothing to do with the poll, and while we're flattered to receive any award, we know—as surely fandom always must—that any award dispensed only by a few hundred fanzine readers (or even by a larger group) is at worst meaningless, at best a pleasant emphemera. I say this, by the way, remembering that I *named* the Alley's back in the early Sixties and counted the very first ballots—and knowing that I usually finish well in the running myself. But still, rather meaningless, more's the pity. But onward...

One of Fred's allegations, at least, is true. Marvel did probably benefit from straight-ticket voting by readers who read the Bullpen Bulletins item. But this itself merely proves that fans (read "readers") in 1968 preferred in general Marvel's product to National's despite the undeniable improvements in quality wrought by Infantino and others. After all, DC itself plugged the Alley's (in larger type yet) in a sizable number of magazines, and if anything more prominently that did Marvel—which used it merely as a bottom-of-the-page throwaway item. (In fact, this was done only as a favor to Mark, and after he had written a plug for

it in the DC books which otherwise would have made it completely *DC* top-heavy.) If Marvel readers responded with greater numbers and enthusiasm than anyone else, than it merely proves that Marvel deserved the awards—that year.

It's really all a matter, Fred, of semantics and of one's definition of a *fan*. Unfortunately, that of the Academy has changed almost every year. In 1968 a fan was anyone who cared to vote—and who saw the poll advertised in a fanzine or a comic book. In 1969 a fan was anyone who cared enough to vote—but who saw the poll advertised only in a fanzine. Neither, I think, has much validity. No fannish poll is ever likely to gain any real respect until it is definitely tied to some group or event. The academy doesn't seem to be that group, as it's moribund despite the best offices of Mark Hanerfeld and Dave Kaler before him. My one choice, influenced by s-f fandom as I am, would be to have all the members of the New York Comicon each year be the voters—and by that, of course, I mean non-attenders as well as those who make the trek to New York. Thus it would cost at least $1 to vote—and the votes would both mean something *and* help support the only national fan event there is. (*EDITOR'S NOTE: You might get an argument from the people who put on the Southwesterncon on that point.*)

But nobody's asked me to settle the anarchial state of comics fandom, and since I now consider comics fandom a nice place to visit but I wouldn't want to live there, I'll push my views no further...except to assure Fred et al that I don't *scorn* the Alley's; indeed, I still own and treasure the one I won some years ago for my fan work. But that the awards should have any meaning to professionals—not until the fans show they can organize something more constructive than a comic-trading session.

I meant in this letter to comment at length on some of the more asinine statements by Fred with regards to the 1968 awards, but the press of work beckons, so I'll keep this part brief by quoting Fred's statements and my own disagreements:

(1) "In such a talley of strictly fandom, Lee still might have won...but hardly by such a great margin." Quite possibly true, and I yield to few in my liking and admiration for Dick Giordano (among other editors). But Stan is editor over more than two dozen titles of undisputed fannish popularity, Dick over only a handful. Thus Stan has even more *potential* fans than Dick, in the loosest sense of the word. Besides, nothing except actual voting can ever prove statements like Fred's—and the voting just didn't. And since it will never again be 1968, Fred will never be able to prove his unsupported assertion.

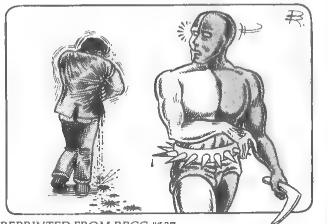
(2) "1968 was Wood's year." Not so's anybody noticed. I like Wally's work, especially his inking, as evinced by the fact that he and I are now at work on a Dr. Doom strip for Marvel. But he didn't do enough significant work in 1968 to affect anyone but the most rapid fan. Wally's winning an art award made more sense several years ago, when he was doing Dynamo; don't try to give him one every time he enters the lists (Now, in 1970, with quite a few Dr. Doom strips under his belt, it might be something else again—and it would make *sense*.)

(3) "That shuck from Lee's about 'King' Kirby enabled Jack to finish second." If Jack never got a vote from the hoardes of fandom, he would still be *the* super hero artist; the 'epitome,' as Gil Kane called him in *A/E 10*. I don't vote for him each and every year myself for various reasons—but the thought of some fans that Jack is overrated by Stan and Marvel is ludicrous. I'm sure Neal Adams (who'll do better in the future, never fear, Fred) would hardly mind finishing second or third to Jack Kirby, since he agrees with Gil's statement—as do most other action artists.

(4 Re Steranko's winning; "Real talent will out!" By this snide statement, Fred, waving a triumphant sword aloft, is saying that justice has won the day—or, to be more precise, that one of his choices won the poll. I've been a Steranko fan longer than most people (since I saw his work long before any of it was published), but Kirby is still the King, in the sense that his superhero art has set the standard for the field since the early 1960's. Other styles are beginning to alter that somewhat today, including Steranko's, Adam's, and even Buscema's. But Jack will remain as the superhero artist par excellence of the 1960's—and a thousand Alley's to such great talents as Steranko, Adams, Williamson, Wood, et al, will hardly change that—any more than voting, say, Denny O'Neil or myself as Best Writers would make us better than Stan. It wouldn't.

Okay, I've had my say, Sorry to go on at even great length than Fred did in RB&CC, and I assure you there's nothing personal in my remarks—but I thought someone might like to hear the opinion of a comics fan who is also a working professional—and who, incidentally, *didn't* vote a straight ticket in 1968 or any other year.

Roy Thomas
Editor, *Alter Ego*



REPRINTED FROM RBCC #137

Dear Jim,

Recently, Jim, I went throuygh a general reassessment of certain parts of my life and ways. This second look was part of a religious awakening. Since I am a comic art collector and (at present) comics are a great part of my life (though certainly not the greatest) one area to go under scrutiny and change was my comic habits. As I said before, it was a religious experience, though not an emotional thing like you see on TV, or hear about or read of. It was simply a mental thing, a reconsideration of certain factors, and an alteration of the ones of those factors that I felt had the potential of hurting me (not physical hurt, but mental hurt). There were no tears, no overnight angelic transformations, etc., but I

just set some things straight, something I had wanted to do for a long time anyway.

As I said before, one of the many areas which I altered was my comic tastes. During the last three years of my collecting, I had always been at disagreement with myself as to whether I should have in my collection certain items which either have an extremely strong sexual overtone, a perverse overtone, and/or overly strong and profane language. These items, to name them, included almost all undergrounds, much of Bode's work, a couple of porn mags, and some other things, including what was left of my *NATIONAL LAMPOONS*.

It, to clarify a point, was *not* the nudity which offended me, but instead was the perversity of most of this work which caused me to dispose of it.

Let's take it piece by piece: the undergrounds. I disposed of nearly all my undergrounds. If one looks at undergrounds today, one finds mostly blatant, unnatural sex acts, violence, perverted artwork, and profane language. One might say, "Well, what about Corben? He worked in the undergrounds and he was a great artist." Well, as much as I wanted my Corben undergrounds, I looked them over and realized that the Corbens were just as profane, sick, whatever, as the others. The perversion of the undergrounds was still present, even in the best undergrounds. It is hard to look at just the art and ignore the story and dialogue. Even then, Corben draws what I think are pretty perverse and lustful drawings (although his are subdued and moderate compared to those of some other underground "artists") and it is hard to look at just the good drawings and discount the bad, since they are both interlocked in a paneled story.

In any case, I thought it over and disposed of the undergrounds, not because they *were* a bad influence, but because they had the potential to be one.

It is not an extreme influence that one has to be wary of. Nobody is going to read an underground comic and (as a result) get so horny that he has to molest somebody, or some other over-reaction. No, it's not those, but instead mostly mental influences that one must be afraid of. Satan works in subtle ways. As Jimmy Carter once quoted, even thinking about a person wrong is wrong. If the tools are there, Satan will use them. Therefore, it is better for the tools to be absent. No human can say, "Well, Satan won't affect me!" That is underestimating the great power of Satan. No one will consciously allow Satan to influence and/or pervert him or her, but Satan doesn't ask.

The Bode stuff: I threw away some of my best Bode stuff. I can hear it now: Some people will say: "You dislike Bode because he was homosexual." Well, no. I threw away only the Bode items that I considered perverse or profane. This proves I was not prejudiced against Bode for his sex beliefs. If I had been, I'd have thrown away *all* of my Bode items in dislike of the man.

Bode could think up the most unusual, off-color, sick profanities that I've ever read or heard. Some of his words, phrases, or combinations of words are outrageously *sick*. This is skipping entirely over his art. Bode's omni-sexuality shows extremely in his artwork, with the sextones ranging from homosexuality to bestiality to fellatio to even something as comparatively minor as fornication and adultery.

Bode, the man, while he was a great human, was himself very perverse, not only sexually, but in other facets of his lifestyle as well. This perverseness was the direct cause of his untimely death.

I did not think to myself, "because Bode is homosexual I will dispose of all his work." Instead I disposed of exact pieces which I thought were perverted and kept those which were more tolerable and less "sick." Bode is a GREAT ARTIST. He has the most beautiful and unique style of this decade. His ideas and sense of humor were perverse and that perversity showed in his writing.

The fact that Bode was sexually "off" does not make him less of a human, nor of a person, but instead it makes him less of a *normal* person. Face it, homosexuality is *not* normal, no matter what one says. There are *no* born homosexuals, nor is it "incurable." If it is normal, then why is the human body made to conflict with it? However, I am not an Anita Bryant, (I don't even agree with her) and will not pursue the point any longer.

The Bode stuff I got rid of was mostly his Cavalier work that I had tear-sheets of, and the Cheech Wizard stuff. That was the only stuff that was really perverted that Bode did that I had. I will still buy most Bode work, and still collect it, and still have a great admiration of the great thoughts of this person. However, I will not patronize the sick thoughts of the same man put on paper.

Next: The two porn mags. This was the simplest of all. My only two "men's magazines" were 1) The *PLAYBOY* with the Carter interview, and 2)The magazine with the Frazetta article in it. This problem was the easiest to solve...I cut out the two above-mentioned articles and threw the rest away.

Lastly: The *NATIONAL LAMPOONS*. Over a year or so ago, I had already cleared out most of my *NatLamps*. I sold them all, but I kept a few. In my "house-cleaning" I rid myself even of those remaining few. *NATIONAL LAMPOON* is probably the most perverted publication that is publically available. they, although reasonably funny, have converted into a vehicle for sick humor. The intelligent humor addict will read *ESQUIRE*, Woody Allen, Art Buchwald, Don Rosa, etc. The pervert will read *NATIONAL LAMPOON*.

In closing, I'd like to express two points:

1) I didn't sell these things which I got rid of. Nor did I merely throw them away. I burned them. It was roughly $100 worth of stuff that went up in flames. The reason: Sure, I could have easily sold them, but that would have been just as bad as keeping them, as it would and could have endangered someone else, which would have been *worse*.

2) This was not something I did on a moment's notice. I had been subconsciously wanting to do this for a long time. I had been denying my thoughts; trying to brush them away, trying to rationalize in the better interest of my collection...in effect, putting my comic collection before God, up until the very day I burned those books.

In any case, Jim, I just felt that this might slightly interest you. I would welcome commentary and/or criticism on this, as I feel I can defend my beliefs of actions against most of what comes up. So, now I'll leave.

Ken Stribling
5273 Wayneland Drive
Jackson, Miss. 39211

Rather than comment on this letter myself, I think it would be much more interesting to hear the reactions of you the readers to this highly unusual letter. I would rather the discussion, if possible, concentrate on whether Ken was endangered by his collection, etc. rather than on his extreme views of homosexuality.

More of the Best of RBCC religion letters... THE FOLLOWING LETTERS ARE FROM *RBCC*#138

Dear Jim,

I really wish you hadn't printed the letter from the religious fanatic. I am assuming that it was serious and not some sort of joke, which is too bad because with just a little rewriting it could have been one of the funniest loc's I've read in a long time.

You ask us if this guy's collection really endangered him. It obviously endangered his peace of mind, and therefore he was certainly justified in throwing it away (or for that matter, burning it I suppose, though that seems foolish). Now, as to the perverted reasoning behind his allowing himself to have his peace of mind destroyed by a stack of pulp paper, I will not comment. I can't comment on it even if I wanted to; I don't understand it. It is too *unnatural* for me to grasp.

Robert P. Barger
P.O. Box 8
Evensville, Tenn.

Dear Jim,

A few issues ago I let my subscription to *The RBCC* run out. I have resubscribed only to find even more improvements than last year.

COMICS COMMENTARY is a long time coming. Fandom needs a place to discuss the issues that concern us. *Beautiful Balloons* in *THE BUYER'S GUIDE* is O.K., but it spends too much time in the non-comic related areas. I really enjoy the behind-the-scenes tidbits about the comic industry.

Ken Stribling's letter in #137 was interesting. As a person who teaches the profoundly retarded, I can assure you the word "normal" is quite unimportant.

As I teach my "clients" simple tasks, our environment teaches us complex ones. We learn our sexuality; we are not born heterosexual in an innate sense. In fact, man is the only animal with an advanced cerebral cortex. It is the cerebral cortex that gives man his freedom to deviate in areas ruled by instinct in animals; sexuality included.

Ken seems to believe there is something evil about sexually explicit comics. I don't find that so. In fact, I believe that good and evil are value judgements created by men, for men. We are both entitled to our beliefs.

Ken mentioned Vaughn Bode in his letter, and I find nothing perverse in Vaughn's work. One of the best examples of this is *CHEECH WIZARD/SCHIZOPHRENIA*. As you know, when the book is turned sideways, the left half is comprised of a story about Vaughn. The right half makes up a Cheech Wizard episode.

As usual, the Cheech Wizard strip is funny, full of four letter words, and sexually explicit.

But the left half is comics history!! Here, in a little series of panels, an artist draws himself and gives himself to us. Not a character, but himself.

If one really understands the left side of *CHEECH WIZARD/SCHIZOPHRENIA*, the right side gains new meaning. The four letter words, sex, and irreverence suddenly become wholesome and beautiful, even innocent. And innocence was something the little wizard was never accused of, until we knew the man.

No; Vaughn Bode was not perverse! Just creative and beautiful...just a person.

I suspect there are other artists like him, as well

Ron Sikes, Apt. C-3
2700 S.W. Archer Road
Gainesville, Fla. 32608

Dear Jim,

I agree with a lot that Ken Stribling said in *RBCC* #137. He said some things I had wanted to say myself for a long time about the influence of certain materials on a person.

I never had any exposure to underground material until I saw that issue of *RBCC* which had Bode in it. What I saw turned me completely off. His excessive use of profane language and the way he protrayed women in general was sick. Also, I thought his artwork stunk. I would never buy any of his stuff or any other underground if that is a reflection of it.

I don't have any men's magazines at present and don't intend to get any because I believe they are a bad influence. But, I was exposed to my share of them when I was growing up. How many men could honestly say that they would get a *PLAYBOY* just for an article in it? *[Editor's Note: When ever I buy a* PLAYBOY, *it is either for "*Little Annie Fannie*" by Kurtzman and Elder, a good Gahan Wilson cartoon, or something else similar in nature...such as an article.]* If he was honest with himself he did it mainly to look at pictures and/or read the dirty jokes. If a person looks at or reads such stuff very much he will have a tendency to think of women as simply object to be used for sexual purposes and nothing else. That is true because of the way they portray women in such magazines. He

should remember that women are human beings with feelings and emotions and that no one likes to be treated like an object.

There are a couple of other matters unrelated to what Ken Stribling said that I want to comment on. One thing is the use of nude women in ads to attract attention such as the one on page 68 of *RBCC #137*. The use of such things to attract attention is unnecessary and uncalled for when it has nothing to do with what they are selling. *[Actually, I find nothing wrong with an artistic rendering of a nude when it is done well and not intended to be garish. The one in* RBCC *#137 was actually quite nice.]*

The other thing I would like to comment on is such ads as on page 48 of *RBCC* called "Dungeon of Fear." This kind of ad is in poor taste and such a thing belongs more in a porn magazine than in a high quality fanzine like *RBCC*. It has nothing to do with comics. *[Actually...I agree with you! RBCC #136 and 137each had an ad of that type in them. At first I thought, well, I can live with an ad like that once in a great while if it's only a quarter page. Then the second ad showed up and I frowned and wondered. Then I saw a third such ad in* THE COMICS JOURNAL *and I decided that before this had a chance to become epidemic I'd just stop accepting them. The one in* TCJ *had to do with a comic strip involving women beating each other up. This is bizarre, friends. If sadismo fandom wants to meet, they'll have to meet elsewhere.* The RBCC *won't even let you ride in the back of the bus. I don't believe* TBG *will anymore, either.]*

I agree wholeheartedly with Ken Stribling's views on homosexuality. I do not consider his viewpoint extreme at all. A person is not normal in any sense of the word if he is a homosexual.

In conclusion, I think that overall *RBCC* is a top quality fanzine not only because of its articles, but because of its willingness to print interviews even if you as editor disagree.

George L. Lumpkin
205 6th Street West
Alexander City, Al. 35010

Dear Jim,

I usually don't write to magazines, but I felt that I must present my opinion in relation to Ken Stribling's letter.

His rejection of certain "corrupting" influences was due to his religious awakening. How come upon "getting religion" everyone believes themselves servants of GOD? Why a total (in most cases) change in opinions and views?

Why? Because that person now believes himself better than the non-religious person...that his opinions are better than others. But, upon "getting religion" he no longer has his own opinions...only those of his selected religion. And this is what I object to most...a person injecting his moralistic views upon me. I'm not saying that Ken is trying to force his views on anybody...but his view typify those who do. The self-appointed "experts" or guardians of our morals. They interpret the Bible as saying that so-called "porno" is bad, so they crusade against it (whether they like porno or not). They feel it is their duty.

I agree with Ken that most undergrounds are crap...full of sex and violence. I prefer more of a story so I don't usually read these ones...but I wouldn't deny someone else their right to read them.

As for BODE...I've always liked his style, but never his subject matter. I am bored by homosexuals, S&M, B&D, and other such "abnormal" sexual acts. BUT I would not tell someone that they could not do said act... if it *isn't* directly harmful to someone else or society (thus I am against sex murders, et al).

I can't see why anyone would call *PLAYBOY* porno...mostly, a guy who doesn't object to pictures of naked women. *PLAYBOY* has some of the best fiction and articles I have read , plus having the best cartoons anywhere. It happens to be the best general interest magazine on the market...that happens to have nudes (so it will sell to the general public). Now *HUSTLER* is a different matter...

I never could stand *NATIONAL LAMPOON*. I have a broad sense of humor..yet most of *NAT LAMP* is unfunny to me...in fact, stupid.

I have yet to read convincing evidence to conclude that any media really perverts anyone. True, someone might reenact a scene from a movie...but the movie did not cause this person to go out and perform the act. He (or she) would have committed some similar act...the viewed scene only gave a way to do it. Media (comics, movies, TV, et al) may influence anti-social individuals, but it surely does not create them. I am a scientist (a zoologist, to be exact) and have read much of the research on the subject (this includes over 12 books) and I still find no conclusive proof. Therefore, in answer to Ken's letter...he was endangered by his collection. A person can only be corrupted if he wants to be...

In fact, some of the worst comics and books on the market are those so-called "Christian" ones. These give the reader the feeling that if they accept Christ everything will be okay and all their problems will be gone. Upon accepting Christ, one's problems remain, only now they are clouded by religious mumble-jumble...those sex hang-ups, money problems, unemployments still remains. Only now you don't care. Religion turns you into a mental zombie! (Wow a new Christian comic for Marvel...*TALES OF THE MENTAL ZOMBIES*!). Now, don't get me wrong, I am not against religion (some of my best friends are religious)...it is great if one needs it. But I don't think that they should press their beliefs on us...just because their minds are so clouded it doesn't mean we want ours so polluted. One such "Christian" comic I really object to is CTE's *PREHISTORIC MAN* (does CTE stand for Christians to the end?)...which gives all kinds of misinformation about evolution and scientific method. If this isn't corruptive I don't know what is. If undergrounds corrupt then so do these "Christian" comics...giving everyone the belief that accepting God or Christ will solve everything. Who is to say one type of "corruption" is better than another? Not me and, surely, not Ken.

Let me leave you with one example of a person I know...and everyone who knows him will agree with me. He is the most moralistic person I know...altruistic...helpful...et al. Yet, he is an atheist, reads comics (for over 15 years), reads men's magazines (from *PLAYBOY* to *HUSTLER* to out-and-out porno) by the hundreds...because he is a writer and does so to see what is being done; watches TV and movies endlessly. Wouldn't you think that this much exposure would have corrupted this atheist in his 25 years of life? If media can corrupt, it should have. But it

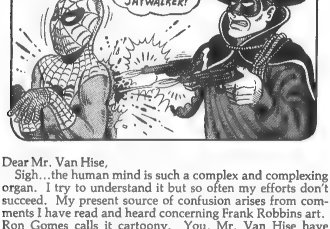
didn't...he remains moral for he believes it is right (not because "God Told Him To"), sexually active without hangups or need for abnormal sex (though he has read and seen tons of it), and defends a person's right to have religion if needed. I know that this guy has not been corrupted by the media. He is not endangered by his collection. I know this to be true...for this guy is me.

Paul Hugli
9440 Nichols
Bellflower, Cal. 90706

Boy Jim,

I am really shocked on reading from Ken Stribling's letter. I felt that he was wrong to burn those publications. Fire is a collector's worst enemy. I feel that Mr. Stribling has something loose upstairs and unfortunately you printed his joke for all of *RBCC*'ers to read. [*Note: It was NO joke.*] You made a mistake but he and his comments are uncalled for, not true, and very "anti-collector."

John S. Iavarone
7 Glendale Avenue
Albany, N.Y. 12208



Dear Mr. Van Hise,

Sigh...the human mind is such a complex and complexing organ. I try to understand it but so often my efforts don't succeed. My present source of confusion arises from comments I have read and heard concerning Frank Robbins art. Ron Gomes calls it cartoony. You, Mr. Van Hise have previously indicated your dislike of it and Mark Burbey seems to dislike it a bit too. I enjoy Mr. Robbins work very much. How can I convince you that something you dislike is of value, particularly in comics one of the world's most critical mediums of intellectual and artistic intercourse. I don't even know if I could change your mind, but I would like to offer some comments all of which are opinions. You may pick and choose which fit your personal philosophy and discard those that do not.

1) The ultimate test of any comic book artist is "Does he tell a story". If he does he works. This is why many of the artists which are almost universally disliked by "fans" continue to work. The lack of storytelling ability will destroy a story. This is perhaps why the Phillippine artists have failed to capture the American public even though each panel is a true beauty to view.

2) No artist sells a book (I hate absolutes. They open one so wide to criticism). Even the most "fan" reveered talents in the industry have failed to do so. Adams couldn't sell THE SPECTRE, DEADMAN, X-MEN or GREEN LANTERN. Kirby couldn't sell his fourth world series. CONAN survives without Smith, SPIDER-MAN without Ditko, FANTASTIC FOUR without Kirby, and perhaps saddest from some points of view, Donald Duck survives without Mr. Barks.

3) Good writers sell books, especially when they are coupled with a good story-telling artist. This is why DONALD DUCK is so much poorer for the loss of Barks than CONAN is for the loss of Smith.

4) There is only one real criteria to judge *anything* by. Did I like it. If I did like it, please, don't try to take it away from me unless it hurts me or someone else. Here I guess you will comment that whatever you are criticizing will hurt the industry. I wonder if the companies are not suffering from too much help from the fans. As much as I prefer WARLOCK (as I think most fans do) to JIMMY OLSEN, ask yourself this: Which book fed and clothed more artists, writers, editors, and stock holders?

If I did not enjoy a book then perhaps there is something I missed. When I rejoined fandom, the first DC book I bought was CREEPER -1. I did not enjoy it. When I read it I retired back to "good ole" Marvel. Since then I have been "educated" in some way and now I am very happy to own the entire CREEPER series.

Why?

You tell me Robbins is bad and Mr. Burbey is effusive with an excess of verbiage both cute and cutting. But you haven't told me why.

Do you dislike his use of black colors? (I love it and wish he could ink his own work to highlight his use of black. I *loved* his Batman stories which he wrote, drew, and inked in *Detective*). Do you dislike his figure positioning? (This is what I feel is perhaps his most easily criticized area but this is, I feel, because he approaches the figures from a different (not cartoony) viewpoint than most do. Ditko uses still a different approach.

Does he draw faces you don't like? (I don't particularly like Ditko faces). Does he distort proportion? (Kirby has been getting away with it for years).

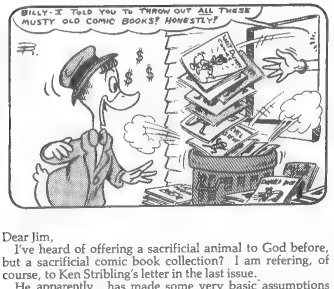
In short, cute, vile, acid, snide criticisms are negative in nature and do not serve you or me. Well thought out criticism is positive in nature since it educates and directs further thought.

As I finish this letter I feel that perhaps I could have spent my time in a more meaningful pursuit if I had chosen to comment on Mr. Burbey's comments concerning "a deserved gory death" carried out, or threatened, by the Creeper on a "punk".

Mr. Burbey, the Creeper is not a judge and jury. This single institution separates the civilized from the uncivilized peoples. A society may be technologically "civilized" to the point where all human wants have been satisfied, but if it lacks a fair judicial system it has not risen one step above barbarism. Society is raped by each individual who does any act (no matter how obscure the penetration) to compromise the right of *any* individual, no matter how heinous, to a fair trial. The danger of your type of thinking is total.

John D. Stefl
830 W. Springfield Rd. E.
Springfield, Pa. 19064

I guess I never elaborated on my reasons for disliking the artwork of Frank Robbins because it always seemed very obvious to me. I feel his art is sloppy and very crude looking. His poor anatomy just makes a bad situation worse. What good is story-telling ability if the art is dreadful to look at? His art looks like something left over from a low point of the 1940's. When Roy Thomas was questioned at Houstoncon '76 as to why Robbins, of all people, was drawing the "Invaders", Thomas talked of Robbins' ability to draw cars and planes but was unable to defend Robbins' basic artistic abilities from the fans' probing.



Dear Jim,

I've heard of offering a sacrificial animal to God before, but a sacrificial comic book collection? I am refering, of course, to Ken Stribling's letter in the last issue.

He apparently has made some very basic assumptions about life that I find, frankly, childish. I am not writing this letter to challenge his beliefs, but rather to expand on the basic theme of the letter. And I hope to explain it a little better than he did, leaving Satan, homsexuality, and God out.

What upset Mr. Stribling was the perversity that had infiltrated the comics field. But the issue is larger than that; it pervades our whole society and the mass media is at the forefront, shoving it down our throats. Without a doubt, decadence is "in".

Now let me explain - it is not violence that I object to. It is not sex that I object to. It is not even perversity that I object to. It is the *glorification* of these things that disturbs me. *It is the deliberate twisting of values and attitudes to make these things appear desirable*, that revolts me. Things have twisted so much that in current slang, "bad" actually means good. 180 degrees! And make no mistake, these twisted attitudes that exist in our media "herds" *absolutely* influence the attitudes we have toward life. (To be "cool" a la James Bond.)

I am totally against censorship, but believe that everyone, including children, should be exposed to all the various facets of life (although with children, gradually and with supervision). Hiding never solves anything. But the exposure must be honest. (This is the only true workable guideline in establishing standards on obscenity). Show violence for exactly what it is. Neither good nor bad, but merely the use of physical force which rarely solves anything. Show sex exactly as it is. Not moral or immoral, but merely physical attraction between the sexes. Love is another subject entirely. Show perversity for exactly the destructive lifestyle it is.

The "romantic" view of "living happily ever after" that is portrayed in escapist fiction is just as twisted as that of porno. Honest reality is what we need when it comes to portraying the human condition in the mass media. Is escapism harmful? No, not in itself. It's like an alcoholic drink; nice every once in a while, but when it's finished, your problems still exist. But too many people become escape-aholics. The central question is, *why* do people need escapism? Obviously to escape reality because they don't know how to face up to it. [*Editor's Note: This is only true in the extreme cases. Escapism is also a form of relaxation. Listening to music is escapism, but is this bad? Of course not. People need entertainment(which is another word for escapism) to relax. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy is not just a simplistic phrase, it describes a very real situation.*] But the mass media doesn't teach us to effectively deal with the world in which we live. (As I belive it should, and should also be its main responsibility!) It merely fills us with false dreams based upon distortions of reality.

The question is why? Why do people in the mass media deliberately push distorted values on us? They will tell you, "Because it sells". Ah yes, the almighty dollar. People forget that they can be wealthy, without money. But *why* does it sell? Is it because that is the only thing they are selling? Has the mass media conditioned us, like Pavlov's dog, to salivate, only at the sight of decadence? Have we forgotten how wonderful reality can be, because no one is teaching that anymore? I don't know. Do you? [*Note: It's very easy to blame the publishers for what we're buying, but it makes no sense Market Trends are based on what sells and what doesn't sell. There are thousands of publications available, but it is the type that sells best which is copied until it seems that's all that's available. What people need is not always what people want. "Charlie's Angels" wouldn't be the number one rated show otherwise.*]

Yes, the mass media are the perpetrators, but they are us. Do you agree that we should stop doing this to ourselves? I address myself specifically to you, Jim. Why did you run that ad on page 48 of the last issue for the bondage strip "Dungeon of Pain"? Is the lousy $5.50 you got to run that ad so important that you will sacrifice your values and help promote bondage? Or are you really a bondage lover? Will you continue to accept ads like that? Where will you draw the line? Don't you think you should have the courage to say, "I won't accept this in my magazine"? When you accept an ad, you help promote that product. Do you really want to promote this kind of stuff? Sorry, Jim, but I feel that your readers deserve an answer. Change has to start somewhere! [*Note: It seems to have started right here already because a few paragraphs back you state, "I am totally against censorship...hiding never solves anything." If so, my willingness to run the ad shouldn't bother you, otherwise you are contradicting yourself. As to those types of ads and their future regarding RBCC I've already stated that earlier in this column in George Lumpkin's letter. When they're few and far between I don't feel those ads are harmful. It's a proliferation that could cause harm and which won't happen in the RBCC*]

As to us consmers, if you agree with me and would like to do something, I suggest you hit the mass media where it hurhurts. Boycott things with twisted values. Every little bit helps.

Mike McKenney
218 Santillane, Apt #22
Coral Gables, Fla. 33134

HEROES

If anything made comic books what they were it was superheroes. The self-same superheroes who completely and totally dominate the comic book page today—or their lookalikes in too similar costumes. This was just a few years after the rebirth of the flying, superstrong denizens of the funniebook world and many could still remember the time before when the only costumed crimefighters running loose in their own books were Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman and the glory days were considered over for good. Funny animals, teen heroes, westerns and horror were the order of the day. Now it was all changing.

For the first time in many years there were lots of companies putting out loads of gaudily garbed characters and many of them were quite unique. And, of course, there were many crossovers with other genres. Magnus, Robot Fighter may have worn a clever uniform and demonstrated superstrength but he was obviously set in a world of science fiction elements when robots ruled. Adam Strange was a classic science fiction space opera hero but he was definitely costumed and finally even joined the Justice League of America. Captain Atom was converted to nuclear energy in an unfortunate explosion and explored the byways of the planets but he finally settled down to lead a normal superheroic life along with other heroes and fighting classic supervillains.

But huddled among the superhero fans was a small but dedicated group of writers and readers who longed for the faded glories of the pre-superhero fifties and kept the flame of EC Comics alive. They wrote, read and published about their favorite works of that period, particularly the adpatations of the wonderous works of Ray Bradbury to the four color page. To them Mars would always be heaven.

In this section we salute both groups, both those who lovingly leaped upon the new world of comic book heroes and those who remembered an earlier day.

MAGNUS, ROBOT FIGHTER

4000 A.D.

BY JAMES VAN HISE

In early 1962, an idea was born in the mind of Chase Craig, editor of Western Publishing Company (Gold Key). This idea was to do a comic which took place in the far future, such as their comic *THE JETSONS* did, except that the science fiction concepts would be treated seriously. He wanted it to be about a future society dominated by robots.

Russ Manning first heard of the book when in March, 1962, Jack Taylor, the Art Director, mentioned to Russ that he was being considered for the book. Russ immediately went to Chase Craig to ask him about it. They discussed the idea and Russ was able to not only land the art assignment but the writing assignment as well due to his having read a great deal of science fiction. Due to the concept still being in a very simple form, that of not much more than an idea, Russ was given free reign in developing and fleshing out the character. Manning had decided to make the character a Tarzan of the future. Man at his simplest. Originally he gave the character... a stone hammer slung at his side which he would use to overcome robots. The names Manning submitted for the character were Hammer, Mann and Magnus. Chase, and his assistant Zetta DeVoe, went over Manning's layout for the character and made suggestions. That they adopted the name Magnus was one of them. It was Manning's wife, Dodie, who suggested he drop the idea of the hammer and replace it with a form of super karate.

Originally, there were two concepts for the costume Magnus would wear, both different from what he finally did wear. The first was just a pair of red trunks and a pair of strapless soles that stuck to the bottom of his feet. The second was a sleeve-less jump suit such as most other characters in the Magnus comics wore. The just trunks costume was chosen and Manning drew the entire 27 page first story for the first issue with this costume. It was sent East and then promptly returned with a request that Magnus wear some clothes. It was okay for Tarzan to run around half clad, but not Magnus, for whatever reasons. Manning then submitted more costume designs and the tunic, trunks and boots was chosen. He then went through all the strip and drew the costume in all the panels. On the first page he gave the coloring instructions but neglected to mention what color the boots were to be, just assuming the colorist would realize that boots are black. The colorist didn't and thus is the origin of Magnus' unique concept of white boots.

Thus although Magnus was not solely created by Russ Manning, it was largely shaped and molded by him from ideas suggested by others. The late artist Jess Marsh, who drew the Tarzan comic for many years before Russ Manning took it over at Gold Key, suggested the human mind computer which was used by the robot H-8 in *MAGNUS #1*. One might also trace this idea to a story which appeared in the E.C. comic *WEIRD FANTASY #17* in the story *"Ahead of the Game"* which appeared in 1953.

Although there were several other writers who worked on Magnus throughout its existence, Russ Manning was the chief writer as he wrote the first issue and others and often reworked the stories in issues he did not write. The robot speech receptor implanted in Magnus' skull was Manning's idea, one which he came up with while writing the first story.

The first issue of *MAGNUS* hit the stands around November of 1962 when Gold Key was publishing quite a few titles, many of them one shots. But Magnus was no one shot. It was announced as a quarterly in the first issue and it remained so throughout Russ Manning's five year tenure on the strip.

The first issue introduced us to Magnus and the world of 4000 A.D. It is the glittering world of the far future often pictured in science fiction. The entire continent of North America is now one multileveled city called North Am. But there is a fly in the ointment. Mankind has become too dependent on his robot servants, and in subtle deadly ways the servants have become the masters. This is what Magnus has come to stop and to prevent from growing. At the left he discusses his purpose among humanity with his teacher, the robot 1A, from page three of *MAGNUS #1*. At first Magnus wanders among the people, observing them. He takes no direct action until he sees a robot destroy a book some children were reading about tyrants of the past. Despite its built in directive, this robot is giving orders to humans. The children push the robot over a ledge, destroying it, but Polrobs come to take them away... for destroying a renegade robot. Magnus goes into action and destroys the two robots. He has struck the first blow in the revolution against the robots. In escaping the robots he meets another robot resister, Leeja Clane, daughter of Senator Clane of North Am. Here, for the only time in the series, he reveals his origin. Magnus explains that he was an orphan and that as a baby he was taken by 1A, a robot, to a bubble-house in the deepest part of the Antarctic Ocean. He was raised by 1A, who is a robot with virtually human intelligence who can see what evil robots are doing to mankind. Magnus was trained in every science known to man, but his intellectual training was not confined to just hard science. One scene shows a young Magnus reading *THE PHILOSOPHY OF THOMAS JEFFERSON*. And then, as Magnus put it, "with the most perfect method ever achieved, he trained my body... my muscles and nervous system... to steel smashing strength!"

On the subject of Magnus' robot smashing ability, it is in-

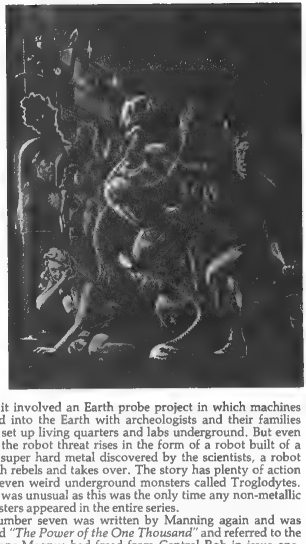
REMEMBER...WHEN - I - LEAVE - YOU, ONLY - YOUR - INCREDIBLE STEEL-SMASHING-STRENGTH... AND-YOUR-WITS...WILL STAND-BETWEEN-HUMANS AND-THE-EVIL-ROBOTS!
I'LL REMEMBER ...AND DON'T WORRY, OLD-TIMER, I'LL FIND AND SMASH EVERY ROBOT THAT HAS TURNED AGAINST HUMANS... JUST AS YOU'VE TRAINED ME!
IT-WILL-NOT-BE-EASY! SEARCH-THEM-OUT! YOU-MUST-DISCOVER-WHAT-EVIL-IS-CAUSING-ROBOTS-TO-BREAK-THE-BASIC-LAW!
1A-LOOK!
A-POLROB! AIR-POLICE-ROBOT—/
ATTENTION-UNLICENSED-AIR-CAR! YOU-WILL-FOLLOW-ME-TO-EARTH-AT-ONCE!
POLROB 678
POLROB 678
ROBOT FIGHTER #1 P. 3

teresting to note that no one involved in the creation and development of the character knew anything about karate, just as very few people reading comics, even today, really know anything about karate... other than the name. Manning readily admits that he really knows nothing about karate and feels, in looking back, that the way he drew Magnus demonstrated this lack of knowledge on his part. In the letter column of *MAGNUS #5*, a reader asks to have them show Magnus using other forms of karate such as kindo and judo. The response they gave totally ignored the question, thus revealing that they didn't know what the guy was talking about, although the question itself, obviously delivered by someone with some working knowledge of the subject, demonstrated that Manning's bluff was far more successful than he gives it credit for.

The remainder of the first issue of *MAGNUS* details his encounter with his first truly evil intelligent robot, the chief of Central Rob, H-8 (which the robot himself says he pronounces as "hate"). The encounter is powerful and the dialogue amid the crashing battle is well handled. Russ Manning did an excellent job on the writing and as good as many of the issues were that followed, this issue remains the best, storywise, of the run.

During the first year of *MAGNUS* one can see Russ Manning's art developing, his lines becoming bolder, his style more powerful. Although the art in the first issue is very good, excellent in fact, it is not the more polished style of drawing we would come to know by issue number five. Russ Manning had been doing work for Gold Key for several years (besides in many of their movie and tv titles, he did strips in the back of many of the early issues of Dell's *TARZAN*) and his style had gradually been maturing. But it was during *MAGNUS* that it developed the most in the shortest period of time. By *MAGNUS #18*, four and one-half years later, he had not only hit his stride in doing more detailed backgrounds and breathing more life into his characterizations, but was also doing with light and shadow marvelous things to enhance not only the mood of the story but the design of his creations. As great as the work he has done on *TARZAN* since he left comic books has been, it doesn't begin to approach the mastery of imagination revealed in his ultra-SF work on *MAGNUS*.

The stories in *MAGNUS* introduced many new comic fans, myself included, to many marvelous new worlds of science fiction. The first issue introduced us to the world of Magnus in general, and to him in particular. The second issue seemed to only mark time as Magnus battled a robot duplicate of himself. The third issue introduced the recurring villain Xyrkol (pronounced Zurkol) and took Magnus from a North Am besieged by a gigantic robot, to a distant planet and back again. The fourth issue took us to the world beneath the sea circa 4000 A.D. and the many food processing laboratories which of needs exist there to help supply the vast needs of North Am's population. In the fifth issue, even before we are introduced to the threat of the reappearance of Xyrkol, we encounter luxurious floating restaurants drifting high over North Am on magnetic beams. In this issue, when Magnus encounters the threat of Sigma, an apparently immortal robot, he turns to his mentor, 1A, for help. Although Leeja comes across a bit too much as a dimwit in this issue, the story is still very tight and the use of a pure black and white panel covering two-thirds of the page, purely for its effects and impact, again show the stuff of which this comic was made. It was things such as this, the artwork not just telling the story but working hand in hand with it, that set it off from any of the other comics on the stands. Issue five was the first issue since number one that was solely written by Manning, which further explains the careful integration of story and art. Issue six, which wasn't written by Manning, further introduces us to the world of 4000A.D. In this



case it involved an Earth probe project in which machines bored into the Earth with archeologists and their families who set up living quarters and labs underground. But even here the robot threat rises in the form of a robot built of a new super hard metal discovered by the scientists, a robot which rebels and takes over. The story has plenty of action and even weird underground monsters called Troglodytes. This was unusual as this was the only time any non-metallic monsters appeared in the entire series.

Number seven was written by Manning again and was called *"The Power of the One Thousand"* and referred to the humans Magnus had freed from Central Rob in issue one. The story introduced us to the Gophs, the petty criminals and social misfits who live on the very lowest levels of the city. Manning admits that he tends to put a lot into his stories and this one is a prime example as it also has a plague that destroys robots, the re-return of Xyrkol, and a journey 60,000 light years from Earth to the planet Malev-6 which is a robot world. This world is one gigantic electronic brain which even has an origin of how it came to be. Magnus uses his wits as well as his strength to defeat it, although his ultimate salvation comes from the power of the one thousand minds who search the universe mentally looking for him. Issue eight, also written by Manning, revealed more of the wonders of North Am, in this case North Am's weather control station and that a thousand years before a war had been fought over its institution. The imagination unleashed by Manning in his art here is nothing short of glittering, from the wonders of the festival to the encounter with the ancient battle rob which takes over weather control. This issue ranks as one of the top five of the series. The story had even more elements that those which we saw in it as Manning agreed when his editors said they felt it had *too* much in it when they got to things like cat people from outer space. After reading it one wonders how it could have possibly contained anything else.

Number nine had robots which contained the thought processes of a man who had died. He had programmed the robots to seek revenge on Magnus and the council of North

"1A FORSAW MAN'S TROUBLES WITH EVIL ROBOTS...AND TRAINED ME TO HELP COMBAT THEM! HE POURED KNOWLEDGE INTO ME...THEN GAVE ME STEEL-SMASHING STRENGTH BY AN INCREDIBLE TRAINING METHOD HE PERFECTED!"

Am because they refused to follow his design for mankinds' total dependance on robots. Due to a powerful force field, the robots are invincible. They're so successful in resisting every means of destroying them that they finally have to be dealt with by tricking them into a rocket and blasting them into space.

Issue ten has another return engagement of Magnus versus Xyrkol. This time Magnus tracks him down at the south pole, and for the second time (he also did it in number five) uses Xyrkol's body to smash a robot! For the first time Magnus actually captures Xyrkol, but that is not the climax of the story. This comes when he must defeat a giant android built by Xyrkol. This issue has something else to recommend it. In the "Robot Gallery" (a page where they publish drawings sent in by fans) there's a marvelous drawing of a weird guard rob done by one Walter Simonson of College Park, Maryland. And if there is any doubt that it's the same Walter Simonson whose art is much admired today, all one has to do is look at the signature. This was in 1965!

Fan writer and publisher Richard Kyle sent editor Chase Craig a synopsis about a talking dog. Chase didn't use it but Manning used it for inspiration when he wrote *"Beasts of Steel"* for issue #11. This also ranks near the top of quality issues in the series as it introduced us to the intelligent neo-animals which included a huge snake, a puma, an eagle, a raccoon and two talking apes. This issue marked the first return of Mekman from issue number two. Mekman uses robot wolves and gorillas in his plot against North Am. This story has an unusual touch in the way Mekman uses a post-hypnotic suggestion to overcome the psycho-probes designed to cure his criminal tendencies.

In issue twelve a madman plans to destroy North Am through the use of volcanoes and earthquakes. When he is made to realize that he's sick and needs help, his robots won't let him end his plan and they continue on without him, as they were programmed. Again in this issue, the defeat of the robots is not the climax as they had done their work too well. The story has twists and turns every step of the way. The three-quarter page panel on the last page adds a beautiful touch to the end of the story.

Issues thirteen through nineteen continued to maintain a high level in both story and art. All of them had high points and memorable moments. #13 had its journey to a spaceship orbiting the sun and the weird robots therein. It also featured one of the best covers of the entire series. Number fifteen featured *"The Weird World of Mogul Badur,"* and weird it was, as well as one of the best of the Magnus adventures. The journey into another dimension and the bizarre world therein revealed as yet new heights in Manning's art and writing. Number sixteen reintroduced the characters introduced in number eleven, namely Danae and her neo-animals. This issue had a talking neo-dog and inbetween the action was a lot of good writing involving conflict of characters and emotional development. It's another example of why this comic was so different, so special, from others. Number seventeen had an alien from space and a lot of bizarre action, as well as Russ Manning's art in tip top form. In number eighteen 1A makes a surprise appearance when Magnus becomes a fugitive from North Am when he's falsely accused of being a non-human alien. The story has its usual twists and a lot of incredible Manning art.

In numbers twenty and twenty one the writing seemed less inspired than in previous issues, and Russ Manning himself admits that he didn't think his last issue, # 21, was very good. The last issue he did he got into magic and fully costumed Indians and seemed way off track from the directions the series had been heading. Issue #22 was a reprint of number one as Manning left Gold Key entirely to begin working on the Tarzan newspaper strip.

Issues 23-28 were drawn by Paul Norris, and were as ineptly drawn as they were written. As far as I'm concerned the series ended when Manning left the strip. Gold Key has been reprinting many issues of *MAGNUS* over the past three or four years, and even they have only chosen the Manning issues. Recent word has it that due to the good sales of these reprints, that they are going to do some new *MAGNUS* stories. The quality of them remains to be seen as it was Russ Manning's driving force in both story and art that made this comic one of the best, and perhaps the best comic to come out of the nineteen sixties. Despite Marvel Comics' claims that science fiction comics don't sell, this was one that not only sold... it was good! As often as Marvel has tried SF in their books they have yet to capture the vividness or the sense of wonder that Manning gave to *MAGNUS* in his stories and art. Magnus' world of 4000A.D. seemed tremendously real, and the fact that information about it was expanded and added to throughout the series made it that much more real. It was on *MAGNUS* that Manning came to fandom's attention, and this strip remains as his crowning achievement in comic art.

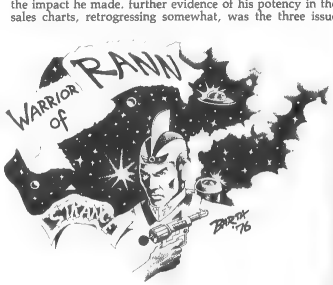
ADAM STRANGE: THE THINKING MAN'S SUPER HERO

BY HOWARD P. SIEGEL

If Adam Strange wore a "double Bobber" instead of a fin topped helmet, and a walking cape instead of propulsion pack, he could have easily been authored by Sir A. Conan Doyle instead of my Yonkers neighbor Gar Fox. Both he and Sherlock Holmes had the same strengths and they were mental, not physical. The ability to deduce, analyze and comprehend. The unknowns did not frighten nor mystify them, for they were too disciplined for that. Why was Adam an instant hero? He brought to a new world and to new people abilities that were alien to them. On Earth, a combination of heredity, acquired talent and the training of an archeologist were the legacies he took with him to Rann. Unlike the people he championed, he could "see the forest for the trees." The technology, although advanced in comparison to that of his native planet, was comprehendable. It was all too new for him to be any other way but curious and investigative. There were times when he was just too unconventional by the usual super hero standards. And perhaps that was what made him so popular with readers. He was different. He also had top talent handling him during his first run heyday...Infantino, Anderson and the aforementioned Fox.

It all began in 1958, the November issue of Showcase to be exact. Seventeen by issue number, and smack in the middle of an industry transition. The Marvel Age was three years away, costumed adventurers were feeling out the buying public for acceptance and a hopeful future. Golden Age formuli in new dress, familiar names, proven themes. Three tryouts followed by a six year career in *MYSTERY IN SPACE* which many collectors still consider one of the best titles of that time. From it, and companion piece *STRANGE ADVENTURES* came stories that have received excellent reviews even when reprinted for a new audience. Elsewhere in this special issue is no doubt mentioned the zeta beam, the 25 trillion mile journey to the Star Sun Alpha Centauri and the triple sunned, green sky planet known as Rann. Of Alanna, then the flop skirted girlfriend, today the leotard garbed wife. It wasn't until his second career that Adam's existence became overcomplicated no thanks to father-in-law/scientist Sardath and new writers who sought to fit him into JLA guest shots and a revived STRANGE ADVENTURES short run. More about that disappointment later. One of the unexplained mysteries was his acquisition of the new famous red, orange and white costume. Unlike Green Lantern, we know little of Adam's space ship benefactor. And unlike a predecessor, Captain Comet, the editors had the good sense not to mangle his appearance.

The covers of MYSTERY IN SPACE were excellent, several winning awards. The stories scored well too. Many becoming nominees or winners in several fan contests, topped by issue No. 75, "The Planet That Came To A Standstill", No. 82, "World War on Earth — And Rann", and No. 90, "Planets in Peril". In 1962 No. 75 won the Alley Award for best full length story. It featured Kanjar Ro, the alien villain with the handleless strainers for eyes who first plagued the J.L.A. with his slave ship of space in the third issue of their title, and was to come back again in 1975 and 1976 with Adam as the guest star. In the 1963 polls, MYSTERY IN SPACE won the award for best interior color work, which is ironic by virtue of the fact that reprinted stories in the revived STRANGE ADVENTURES in 1969 and 1970 were altered in a disappointing fashion. To the collector-detective who looks for such things, it would be evident that greens became blues, reds became yellows and greys became blacks. Then in 1968's balloting, Adam Strange was the strip most desired for revival. A tribute to the impact he made. further evidence of his potency in the sales charts, retrogressing somewhat, was the three issue

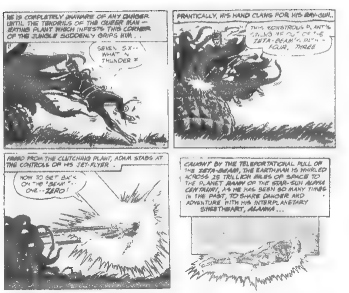


series (Nos. 87 to 90) in which Hawkman shared MIS with "Earth's First Space Explorer". Once and for all, the DC editors were determined to make Hawkman a winner, so after two BRAVE AND BOLD tryouts, they showcased him with Adam, and it worked. Soon after, the winged policeman from Thanagar enjoyed a 27 issue solo run, Adam Strange guesting in Nos. 18 and 19.

With super heroes in full swing, one would think that the editors would be satisfied with a successful strip; but as has happened too many times in the past, assignment switches have led to deterioration of a character. Adam was not immune. His loyal followers were stricken by the cover of issue No. 92 (June, 1964). Instead of the familiar costumed adventurer, Space Ranger appeared. And inside the famous Infantino art was replaced by that of Lee Elias, whose credits included that super-spelunker, Cave Carson who taxi-squaded between BRAVE & BOLD and SHOWCASE and the feature that occupied the main slot when MIS was cancelled, Ultra, the Multi-Alien. To further cause anguish, Elias took away the red and white fin topped helmet that was the salient point of Adam's uniform. To the observant, it marked the beginning of the end, and seemingly without justification. He alternated in the lead story with The Ranger, missed No. 101 and the next issue was the last he appeared in (No. 102, Sept. 1965). Perhaps it was for the best. His handling was bad. Inferiority was evident toward the end.

It was 1966. Batman was an overnight sensation on mid-year T.V. A whole new generation of readers was developed along with a merchandising explosion. Manpower was shifted to concentrate on the exploitation of the Caped Crusader. Other stable mainliners were short shrifted. But the spectre of Rann's champion would not go away. The

DC
MYSTERY IN SPACE
12
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MAR. NO. 92
MY NATIVE PLANET EARTH — AND MY ADOPTED PLANET RANN EACH IN DEADLY PERIL! THERE'S ONLY TIME FOR ME TO SAVE ONE! WHICH SHALL IT BE?
WORLD WAR ON EARTH and RANN!


HE IS COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF ANY DANGER UNTIL THE TENDRILS OF THE CRAFTER PLANT — BEYOND PLANT WHICH INTERESTS THIS CORNER OF THE JUNGLE SUDDENLY GRIPS HIM . . .
SEIZES SUDDENLY — WHAT'S THAT?
THUNDER !!
FRANTICALLY, HIS HAND CLAWS FOR HIS BOW-GUN.
THEN, ACKNOWLEDGING PLANT'S FAILURE TO "SEE" HIM, HE CALLS TO THE ZETA-BEAM . . . OUTSIDE . . . FOUR . . . THREE
AWAY FROM THE CLUTCHING PLANT, ADAM STABS AT THE CONTROLS OF HIS ZETA-RIDER . . .
SON OF MIT AND ON THE "BEAM" . . . ONE . . . ZERO !
CALMLY BY THE TELEVISIONAL WALL OF THE ZETA-BEAM, THE EARTHMAN IS HURLED ACROSS 25 TRILLION MILES OF SPACE TO THE PLANET RANN OF THE RED SUN ALPHA CENTAURI, AS HE HAS BEEN SO MANY TIMES IN THE PAST, TO SHARE DANGER AND ADVENTURE WITH HIS INTERPLANETARY SWASHBUCKLING . . .

ABOVE SEQUENCE FROM "MYSTERY IN SPACE" #65, 1961.

zeta beam carried him from the African veldt, the Sargasso Sea or the Australian outback onto the walls of the conference room at 909 Third Avenue in New York City by virtue of the letters that poured in persistently. In 1970 National Periodicals threw the A.S. aficionados a bone via a teamup with Batman in B & B No: 90 with the long time team of Andru and Esposito handling the art, Bob Haney the scripting. But many of us had become spoiled by the MIS quality, and somehow Adam Strange, regardless of the fact that he wore his uniform of old, did not seem the same. The aforementioned J.L.A. appearances followed, with Nos. 120 and 121 resulting in the altering of Adam's body chemistry and the negative effects of the zeta radiation so that he could permanently stay on Rann and subsequently marry Alanna. Prior to that STRANGE ADVENTURES came back, with the 217th issue, sporting a Neal Adams cover and a reprint of the first story from SHOWCASE No. 17 which by that time was priced in the Overstreet Guide at $15.00 Thereafter a new audience was treated to selected early Infantino-Sachs art and Fox stories from MYSTERY IN SPACE. The sixth issue of the series gave readers a new adventure by the team of O'Neil, Kane & Anderson and only made us thirst for more, but we were to be denied. A picture story in No. 226 was not enough. The Atomic Knights reprints took over thereafter, and once again Adam was put into limbo.

What made him so unique? At the beginning of this article I explained that his non-superpowered modus operandi was the answer. Here are a few examples taken from his career highlights:

Threatened by a giant robot controlled by a renegade exruler, the people of Rann are about to surrender when Adam Strange returns from what was almost a watery grave. With Alanna's assistance Adam captures the villain, but the latter refuses to reveal how he controls the robot and continues to keep his stranglehold on the populace despite his internment. Adam finds the control mechanism hidden under the hairpiece of the deposed ruler, and explains, "Avanar Bar cut off his hair to fashion a wig to conceal his remote control device. In doing so, he naturally parted his hair on the customary left side while it was in front of him. But when he put it on, the part was on the right side. I noticed the discrepency in an old picture when he was ruler years ago. The rest was easy to figure out." Shades of Sherlock!

Tom Sutton

In "Vengence of the Dust Devil", a nine page adventure in which the whirling menace followed Adam to Earth, the dialogue went like this: "Wait! I'm getting an idea! When I rubbed my glass gun on the silk shirt of my uniform, the Dust Devil was frozen motionless. Hmm...glass barrel, silk uniform. Of course! I created a field of static electricity!" The purchase of a Wimshurst machine at a science shop in Melbourne, Australia did away with the adversary as he touched the civilian garbed Earthling. An unusual set of circumstances in that Adam battled the Dust Devil on Rann, made his discovery there, and finished him off on his native planet while in his alter ego role of archeologist.

As a final example, issue No. 73 of MIS had a double length story in which Rann's "Champion of Champions" did combat with "The Invisible Raider of Rann". An invasion by alien space ships, manned by soldiers seemingly bodiless, was on the verge of being successful until Adam entered the lead ship and discovered an energy entity was the guiding factor of the empty uniforms. Said being it turns out, was an exiled scientist cum dictator from another world whose pernicious manner to conquer took him to the third planet of the star sun Alpha Centauri. And how did Adam quell the threat? By grabbing the energy being as the zeta beam was wearing off, thus transporting them both to Earth. There, the villain was rendered forever inert, with this reasoning: "Ever since I first went to Rann, I began studying the star we call Alpha Centauri. Here on Earth I learned it was actually a member of a triple star system—three suns revolving around one another. I learned there were other triple suns in the universe too. Zeta Cancri, Xi Scorpi, Omega Eridani and others. When you pointed to your home star system, I recognized Zeta Cancri, a triple sun! Since you told me that your kind of life was inert under the rays of different suns...I reasoned that Earth's single sun would be the one weapon which would prove to be your downfall."

Nominated by The Flash in J.L.A. No. 4 for membership, he turned down the honor, not wanting to be miscast in such elite company where he could only contribute brain power. After all, wasn't Batman the "World's Greatest Detective?" Another "whodunnit" solver was unnecessary. Be that as it may, Adam Strange faced a wide assortment of foes! A two headed sea monster with "Sizzling blue eyes", square headed invaders that dissolved people with a vacuumizer, a gigantic radioactive blob, war machines with flexible talons and stilt like legs (see accompanying art), monstrous fireflies, a globe headed magi that turned beings into a crystalline state, a giant ray gun, deadly shadows of himself, cloud creatures, runaway rockets, underworld giants, and robots housing ghostly entities. He fought on ocean bottoms, in underground cities, on neighboring planets. And yet, there were times when he could be considered a tragic figure. In "World War On Earth and Rann", after saving both his native and adopted planet, the adventure concluded with Adam exclaiming, "How ironic that I am a worldwide hero on Rann—yet here on my own world I am an unknown, unsung hero!" Add to that the sadistic zeta beam, which always managed to wear off just as Adam and Alanna were about to enjoy each other's company after an extremely perilous adventure. "It seems I always arrive on Rann in time to face a new menace", he once expounded, as if to wonder whether he was the victim of some almighty being's playful whimsy. Yet he was to be idolized on Rann centuries after his time, with little children wearing his red, white & orange uniform and playing "Adam Strange", and descendents attempting to follow his legacy, as did one with Space Ranger.

When one thinks of the "good old days" of comic books, certainly our subject ranks high on the list of the prime examples of the quality of the 12¢ and 15¢ periods.

CAPTAIN ATOM

BY HOWARD P. SIEGEL

When it comes to inconspicuous debuts, Charlton's Captain Atom bows to no one. He had three things going against him. The wrong time. A fledgling publisher. A cover which did its best to muffle the fanfare of his entrance into the super-hero world. *SPACE ADVENTURES #33*, May, 1960. That issues, like most of the others coming off the Charlton presses, had dialogue machine typed and a page layout that was carried over from the 1940s. Actually, the good Captain was not Charlton's first stab at the costumed adventurer genre. In March, 1956, a youngster who was given mastery over wind, rain and fire, had a three issue career and gave work to such neophytes as Dick Giordano and John Buscema. He was Nature Boy, and the only spectacular contribution he made to panelology was to prove that the GA Vlue Beetle had powers of flight by lending the latter some six pages of that first issue to prove it. But getting back to our subject, note the date of his origin. It has a bearing in any claim to "firsts" that nuclearmaniacs might make.

Introducing Captain Atom was done in a single paragraph below a one third page panel showing a gold and red clad figure, racing through the dark void of space, tiny energy bursts glowing in the trail behind him, left fist emitting an atomic explosion of microscopic size, and red and blue letters announcing his name. "Meet Captain Atom, the air force career man who knew more about rocketry, missiles, and the universe than any man alive... a specialist of the missile age, a trained, dedicated soldier who was a physics prodigy at age eight, a chemist, a ballistics genuis! In short, Captain Adam was an invaluable space-age soldier even before that memorable day back in '61! Let's revisit the day when an Atlas missile was being readied for blastoff... with an atomic warhead inside... and Captain Adam making the final last-second adjustments." To read the introduction is one thing, to retype it for this article is another. That a high school sophomore wrote it becomes a strong possibility when syntax judges the quality of the work. Nevertheless that's how the Captain began, and Steve Ditko was on his way to a career which included Spiderman, Dr. Strange, the New Blue Beetle, The Creeper, Hawk and Dove, Mr. "A," The Question and most recently Shade The Changing Man.

Dressed only in his air force blues, no pressure suit or any warning that his presence in the soon to be fired missile was unknown to the control center, Captain Adam becomes an involuntary passenger who blacks out from the G forces of the ride before he can fully adjust himself to his fate. Only after the firing do the stock company characters of the master sgt. grease-monkey pal and the C.O. become aware of the situation. Their continued role must be, and is one of grief as the automatic firing control sets off the nuclear warhead 300 miles above the earth. And then it happened. Explosion, atomic dispersal, conversions of matter into energy and energy into matter. It was all over in 3 minutes. And during that short period, Captain Atom was created. Possessing powers yet unknown and untamed, back in human form but emitting radiation so powerful that only a lightweight metal sheathing of Diulustel could contain it. Our hero was "born."

I said in an earlier paragraph that he would make a contribution to super-hero origins. He did. By over a year, he preceded a foursome whose rocket ride through a cosmic radiation storm transformed them into Marvel's early flag bearers. So too, did Dell some five years later, follow almost the exact same pattern in creating Nukla, whose demise into atomic transcription was due to Communist ground to air missiles launched at his U-2 spy ship. Not unusual when it was the same Steve Ditko who did the second, third and fourth issues of this short-lived series.

The prerequisites completed, Captain Atom spends two pages in "feeling himself out," donning a red and gold costume, replete with atomic symbol on his chest and stark white hair above a mask designed by a draftsman with a french curve. And once again out of the formats of WWII, we have the President of the United States blessing our hero, assigning him the task of defending America, and in patriotic glory, our subject standing in front of the flag in rigid attention, saluting and accepting the legacy of his fate. To end his 9 page premiere, he speeds through outer space to detonate a sabotaged Jupiter missile bearing a hydrogen warhead and heading toward an industrial complex. In the final panel, the editors asked if the readers would like to see more of Captain Atom. They did. For a healthy run that lasted through *SPACE ADVENTURES, STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES* and his own title during the Giordano edited action-hero days.

Vol. 3, #34. Captain Atom returned in a lead story titled *"The Second Man in Space."* Again his cover appearance required careful notice, as he occupied a narrow center corridor with billboards of the two other stories appearing in the magazine. Charlton was more interested in the contest they were running with the Transogram Toy Company than they were with giving their new hero an elaborate vehicle for his adventures. Nevertheless, Ditko had him containing his pure U-235 uranium body in a submissive form, turning it on by mental concentration to save a Russian Cosmonaut whose space capsule was in trouble. Thus the story title, as the Red space traveler tells his superiors upon landing that he was not the first earthling in space, but a costumed American with strange powers was. Artistically, it is evident that Ditko had not yet achieved his full potential. The hand and finger positions made famous by Dr. Strange, the fully detailed backgrounds, the facial expressions denoting moods and fears were missing. His use of bold black panels, shadings of muscles and angles were there, though.

Rather than go through each issue of his first run adventures (they were repeated in *STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES* beginning with #75 for three issues), I'll present thumbnail sketches of the remainder of his *SPACE ADVENTURE* career. . .

SPACE ADVENTURES #36 was a two story Captain Atom issue, indicating that reader reaction was in the affirmative. In *"The Wreck of the X-44,"* the good Captain again found himself in a ship destined to explode in space. This time however, it was a rocket powered plant and the disaster was the result of sabotage. What follows is an example of the seeming omnipotence given the character at this stage of the career, as Captain Atom assembles the debris, uses but a portion of his fissionable heat to weld the structure together, and returns it to Earth via his flying ability. Needless to say, the spy is caught. In *"Captain Atom on Planet X,"* the latter a metallic sphere in orbit, we have Ditko showing us some fine artistic ability. His space scenes reek of galactic textures, blacks mingling with the white specks representing celestial bodies, the Earth in proper perspective. Our hero fends off a space invasion in issue 37, as "Space Prowlers" find him too formidable a foe. In the same book he meets some beautiful Venutian women, one of whom would return to haunt him.

By now the covers were showcasing him fully; and most of the action emanted from Cape Canaveral with space exploration and missiles as the vehicles for threading the plots together. "More of Captain Atom" or "Captain Atom—Master of the Universe" were banners above or below the title logo as the last two issues of *SPACE ADVENTURES* to carry him appeared. In *"The Crises,"* Captain Adam disguises himself as a diplomat attending an overseas summit meeting, destroys a mile long row of missiles belonging to a belligerent country (remember, these were still the Cold War years) and ends the power push of the Communists. Out of the Babe Ruth legend comes the plot for *"The Boy and the Stars,"* wherein a dying youngster is given a ride through the Milky Way, stopping long enough to be bathed in curative gamma rays. Although overburdening the story with balloons of dialogue, Ditko displays some of the effects that would grace his Dr. Strange adventures several years hence in this piece. The mask and boots were blue on the cover of *SPACE ADVENTURES* #42, Oct., 1961. He would temporarily end his career with this issue, one month before the Fantastic Four made its debut and heralded in the Marvel Age and the modern era of the super-heroes in general. And for the first time Ditko did not handle the lead story. It was disappointingly done by Rocky Mastroserio and had to do with the rote flying saucer theme. The aforementioned Silver Lady from Venus returned in the back story.

Almost four years later, his original stories were reprinted in *STRANGE SUSPENSE STORIES* beginning with issue 75, June, 1965. This time, however, his name appeared in larger letters than the magazine title. The colorist had a field day subduing the tones, giving a more ominous look to the pages. Why the return? Charlton was attempting to broaden its super-hero line, having such as Vulcan, Blue Beetle, The Fighting Five and Sarge Steel making a grab for their percentage of the market. So why not a hero who showed favorably despite being launched at the wrong time? He clicked. And having used up the published material, Charlton offered new stories and with them experimentation.

Three changes took place with issue #78. The book's title officially became *CAPTAIN ATOM*, the stories were new and longer and the work was split up. Ditko pencilled, Mastroserio inked, Joe Gill scripted and finally the dialogue was hand lettered (by Joe Agostine). Charlton was putting its first team on the assignment. The colors were brighter, notably the reds in our subject's costume, but the art suffered without Ditko's inking. The adversaries? *"They Came From the Planet Blue,"* and were, of course, intent on enslaving the Earth. For the first time, the living nuclear power was not impervious to a weapon. Alien in nature, a blue ray froze the brain cells, leaving a victim a vegetable whose actions could be controlled, albeit temporarily. First a top missile scientist, then Captain Atom in his Air Force alter ego role. He overcame and conquered, not in outer space, but in an underground complex. By this time Ditko was also working for Marvel, and some of their influences were evident. Dr. Spectro, "Master of Moods," replete in black except for brilliantly multi-colored and striped legs and arms, a Pat Masulli creation. At the beginning of the story we see Captain Atom at his atomic best, rearranging the molecular structure of his body in order to penetrate steel walls and using a belt radio to communicate with some unnamed spy agency in Washington. Enter Dr. Spectro, a sideshow attraction at the circus, demonstrating his ability to break up light with wrist prisms to create moods amongst the audience. Disappointed at being scoffed at for his experiments, he turned to the Big Top to ply his discoveries, only to fall victim to an accident in which he was caught directly in the rays of refracted energy from his light apparatus. The results were awesome. Power and evil gained together. A formidable foe, he stood toe to toe with Captain Atom, absorbing the latter's nuclear rays and heatballs into energy within

himself, and in return stunning our hero with that same force. The pattern continued. Captain Atom's seemingly impregnable powers were being chipped away. But good must prevail, and so it did as both fought it out in the heavens, with Dr. Spectro gathering more energy than he was capable of holding, and like a light bulb given too much voltage, he simply imploded into a final burst of color. Much action, much fighting, the trend was set. By the next issue, Vulcan and Blue Beetle were no more, Pete Cannon-Thunderbolt, Judo-master and Giordano were bringing a new look to Charlton. Captain Atom's for in #80 was Drako, ruler of an artificial moon whose path through space would cause it to collide with Earth unless its direction was altered. Acceding to Drako's wishes, the Uranium Man gathers parts and supplies and uses himself as an energy source to stop the catastrophe. In doing so, he is trapped in the apparatus as Drako boasts of his intent to be master of both worlds. At this point we have all the makings of a serial cliff-hanger. Enter the villain's daughter, who sacrifices herself to free our hero, who in turn renders the foe helpless, returns things to proper order, and wishes the space travelers bon voyage as they intern the heavy and go on their peaceful way. We have Ditko at his scenic best in this story. His work prevents the rote scripting from making the presentation a dull affair of oft used pulp plotting.

Next, Dr. Spectro returns! He had been dissipated into pure energy, but his mental forces were intact it seems. Finding a storm cloud whose electrical content was correct to revent him to matter, the evil genius regains form, but instead of one man, become five separate and smaller entities, each one distinguishable by a different colored costume, a pro-

FUJITAKE '77

duct of five lightning bolts created by the storm cloud at the time of transmutation. Each, they discover, has regained a single power of the prismatic functions of the original Dr. Spectro. Their goal is to become one again, which they begin to achieve by gathering the artificial satellites orbiting the Earth and rebuilding them into a space station. Their sanctuary in the sky will become a laboratory, their end will be the destruction of the man that had beaten their whole. Passing up the subplots, we come to the inevitable final confrontation. The fight between good and evil begins, and while the five Drs. become one, they or he is subdued. During the battle we see Captain Atom on the receiving end several times, with an indication that he must build up a defensive shield to protect himself against forces that would have been no trouble four issues back. Giordano is slowly humanizing him, or rather, "Marvelizing" him. Reader reaction would be made known several issues hence, when the letters page is instituted under the byline, "Captain's Column." No. 82 marked a turning point. The introduction of Nightshade and The Ghost, who were respectively Captain Atom's oft times partner and his greatest foe, who would return many times to "haunt" him. Dave Kaler, a name in early fandom, scripted this issue, which like the past few, was a full length story.

The'tale began without fanfare. Captain Atom watches a topsecret Pentagon screening of a ghostly white figure stealing military plans and seemingly vanishing in air. The Nuclear Man is told, "This is the first chance we've had to use her since she offered us her services. She's well trained and very able, despite the great deal of mystery that surrounds her." Enter Nightshade, a masked female in a nondescript costume. She would team up with Captain Atom off and on, but her real power would be limited to only a few instances. Her origin was saved for her solo stories, which began in issue #87, after "The New" Blue Beetle vacated the premises for his own title. The real interest in *"How Do You Catch a Ghost"* centers around Alec Nois, a poor, neglected youth who scratched and clawed his way to adulthood and developed a teleportation device that enabled him to make up for his lost years by evil means. Three fingered gloves housed miniature devices that allowed him to disappear at one place and reappear at another. The all white garb projected the spectral image, and believe me, he was hard to catch as Captain Atom and Nightshade discovered. Only a blow to one of his hands, which broke part of the device, stopped him. It seemed that he was caught in the netherworld as the two wrapped up the case before other vital military information and the gold contents of Fort Knox could be stolen.

No. 83 marked the weakening of Captain Atom's atomic powers. Putting aside the green garbed team of villains and the spy who damages the reactor controls in order to escape the Captain's might, we have a subplot of interest. Atom's costume rips, exposing a portion of his highly radioactive body. This endangers the population, and forces him to a maximum security chamber until his spare protective costume can be located. Meanwhile public fear turns to a panic as he becomes a branded menace. Perhaps it was this disillusionment which had him employ his powers against that of the runaway reactor. He overcame but the end result was the draining of his latent energy. His inbuilt power plant was permanently damaged. He could no longer harness power quickly. A fireball would take much of his reserve from him. He would have to wait until the power built itself up again. And thus it would be for the balance of his career. But at this time he was so weakened that the "green team" captured him. What they did would be told in the following issue, which *"After the Fall* [marked] *a New Beginning."* A disservice was done when a poor cover introduced the "new" Captain Atom. If ever there was material for a showcase billboard it was the concept that followed. Unmasked on TV, ransom was demanded for his return; beaten brutally by a man wearing a pair of metal encased arms driven by a back powerpack, and finally mustering just enough energy to escape, all the reasons for dissolving the character were presented in seven pessimistic pages. Then the details of "Project Rebirth" began to unfold, as the ever loyal Sgt. Gunner sprays a liquid, radiation proof metal which is absorbed under the skin in two layers. First the protective coat, then the colors, stencilled per the design drawn by our hero. Finally, it takes and we have a full page panorama of his new red, white, yellow and blue costume, sans mask. With new inspiration and vigor, he conquers his iron armed adversary and renders useless the base and enemy.

By issue 85, Ditko's backup feature was gaining as much reader reaction and fanzine comment as the star, as the Blue Beetle once again made himself known to the comic book community. It was at this time that Charlton had one of the best titles on the market. Punch & Jewlee were a young couple that came across a chest which contained elfin boots capable of allowing their wearer to fly, strings that transmitted electrical shock, and a red jewel that had hypnotic powers. Weapons enough to create a crime duo in harlequin and court jester costumes. Nightshade rejoins Captain Atom in this adventure, as a lame armed Alex (The Ghost) Nois turns up. Nightshade turns into a shadow for the first time, freeing The Captain from an electronic prison, both capture Punch, Jewlee escapes and The Ghost prepares for a revenge return. In *"The Fury of the Faceless Foe,"* his teleportation device has increased its range and he costumes three henchmen, controlling them from afar as they battle both heroes who are perplexed by the seemingly constant reappearances of The Ghost in another place shortly after they had subdued him elsewhere. His "Operation Ghostly Galleon" is set in motion, using the devices he stole during the Punch and Jewlee episode to extract gold from the seas. During the melee between the costumed government super-agents and their white enemy, there appears from a strange dimension fe-

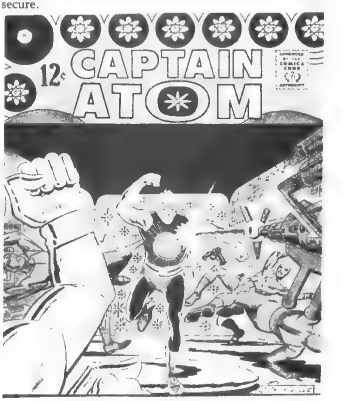
males of another world, who interfere and kidnap the spectral figure via a submersible ship. It is revealed that the strange device in the treasure box found by Punch & Jewlee belongs to them, and are properly retrieved. Somewhat overburdened with a story, perhaps a bit confusing until the following issue when the threads are sewn together. But that continuation never appeared in a regular comic book. More about this later.

For the second time in his career, Captain Atom faced a combination of hot and cold confrontations. "The Fiery Icer" was a foe who utilized those temperature differences in waging war on the high seas. Remember the five Dr. Spectros? Two of them possessed the ability to disperse extreme heat and cold respectively, but that was during the time the Captain had his nuclear powers intact and at their zenith. Now those forces proved difficult to cope with as he's halted temporarily in his battle against the Fiery Icer. Again the ebbing of his powers and the need to resuscitate them crimp his modus operandi. Thankfully there is an electrical generator in the villain's underwater hideout that provides the source for renewed energy and he triumphs over his enemy.

With issue #88 we finally get a chance to see the new Charlton logo and Frank McLaughlin inking, which proved to be as inadequate as Mastroserio's work. Ditko is not easy to work over. *"The Ravage of Ronthor"* has to do with an S.O.S. from outer space. That signal would be answered by a specially built rocket using atomic power supplied by its rider, Captain Atom. Both the breaking into a time-space continuum and a world in another dimension are the objects of endeavor. Our hero finds himself fighting giant insects on the planet Ronthor. Human life no longer exists. The signal, sent eons before, reached Earth too late, and so our hero has no one to save. Not wanting to go back empty handed, he destroys the insects by chemical poisoning and ends the adventure. Our old friend The Ghost returns in the last issue of the run, as Captain Atom meets "Thirteen," a magic wielding figure intent on stealing the same misile as the Ghost. It becomes a round robin as the three fight each other. The climax occurs when we learn that "Thirteen" is really a planetary agent from the future, using science of that age (shades of The Flash's Abracadabra) to regain the missile which contains instruments that could have destroyed the world of 1967. Why? Because its operation was beyond the ken of NASA's top scientists and the object of everyone's attention was sent back in time by accident. The beaten Ghost, back in the netherworld where he is revered as ruler because he looks just like the original messiah of that world, promises himself total and final triumph over Captain Atom at *"The Showdown in Sunuria."* But that was not to occur as the title was cancelled along with all the other action heroes in the Charlton stable. Management decided to resign from the marketplace and stay with other material which sold better. They were gone from the newsstands—Pacemaker, Thunderbolt, Judomaster, Blue Beetle... and Captain Atom. E-Man was to come years later.

Captain Atom did return... in 1975. Charlton's pseudo-house journal for fans, *"The Charlton Bullseye"* featured that last story in it first issue, with the sequel, *"Two Against Sunuria,"* to appear and close the book in *Bullseye* No. 2. The Ghost teleports both the Captain and Nightshade to his new planet, reveals himself as Alex Nois to the both of them and in doing so tips his hand that he is not "The Faceless One" that the women of Sunuria revere as a God. A formal trial by combat begins between the two men, while Nightshade goes her way to find a means for both of them to escape,. She does, with help, and again it seems that The Ghost has perished as Captain Atom and Nightshade return to their time and space dimension.

And that is it. Two power births, two costumes, an unofficial team-mate, revelation of identity and adventures that ranged from Cape Canaveral and saving runaway rockets into other dimensions and worlds. A variety of foes that used mechanics, electronic devices, scientific wizardry and plain old spy methods. Captain Atom faced them all, and did everything that one expects of a good super-hero. He may not have been the best, but to his publisher he was. He was one of the earliest to use the atom as his theme and power base in the post '50s. His place in comic book history is secure.



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ORIGINAL

EC

PICTO-FICTION

Shock

ADULT CRIME STORIES

ILLUSTRATED

Introducing... PICTO-FICTION

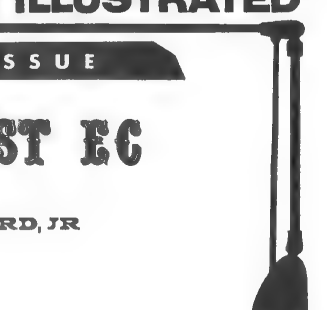
AN ENTERTAINING EC CREATION

Shock ILLUSTRATED

IN THIS ISSUE

THE RAREST EC

BY J.B. CLIFFORD, JR



The rarest and most expensive of the EC publications so admired by comic collectors is the nearly legendary third issue of *SHOCK ILLUSTRATED*. That the *last* of a line of publications should prove the most rare is unusual, for normally it is #1's which hold this position. This article examines the background of the EC Picto-Fiction experiment and explains the reasons for the rarity of *SHOCK ILLUSTRATED #3*. I'll also be examining the magazine itself, including two pages of reprints from it, besides the cover.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PICTO-FICTION MAGAZINES

With the adoption, in 1955, of the Comics Code (CCA), EC killed six titles: *HAUNT OF FEAR, SHOCK SUSPENSESTORIES, VAULT OF HORROR, CRIME SUSPENSTORIES, TALES FROM THE CRYPT*, and *TWO-FISTED TALES*. The last title (TFT) died more from anemic sales than from the CCA, and with profits from the other five gone, EC could no longer keep a losing title out of mere sentiment.

Surviving were *MAD* (the big money maker in the house), *WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY* (soon to endure a title change to *INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION* in order to satisfy the CCA), *PANIC* (a *MAD* imitation, and not a particularly good one), and *PIRACY*.

That year (1955) saw many changes at EC which resulted from the CCA. In addition to dropping five titles, six new titles were introduced as the "New Direction": *IMPACT, VALOR, EXTRA!, ACES HIGH, PSYCHOANALYSIS* and (almost as an afterthought) *M.D.*

Next, in order to escape the tender mercies of the CCA, *MAD* was converted into a 25c magazine. This was a risky thing to do with a proven winner (and the only proven winner in the house), but ultimately proved to be the best move that Gaines ever made. The first issue was a sell-out, and *MAD* has never lost money since.

The next move, although apparently a promising one at the time, nearly proved to be the undoing of EC and Wm. Gaines. Gaines knew that a surprising percentage of his readership consisted of older teenagers and adults; this was an audience unlikely to be kept with the watered down comics allowed under the CCA. He decided to launch a new line of 25¢ magazines, similar in size (though not in content) to *MAD*, with stories on adult themes and old EC themes no longer allowed in comic books.

A new format, dubbed "Picto-Fiction," was evolved in order to establish a clean break with the comic book tradition. This new format was given a tryout in the New Direction comic *Extra #3*; in the letter column that issue the editors said:

"As you can see by this issue, some changes have been made, especially in *Dateline:Algiers*. We hope you like this new type of presentation, but whether or not you do, *it is extremely important that you let us know your opinion.*"

EXTRA! #3 was dated July-Aug., 1955; the first Picto-Fic-

tion title would carry the Sept.-Oct. date.

The Picto-Fiction (PF) format consisted of text, lavishly illustrated, but *without* speech balloons. The magazines were larger than comic books, printed in black and white with color covers.

Possibly fearful that the CCA would attempt to branch out to cover his new line, Gaines launched the series without any reference to his previous operation. The PF's were never promoted in any of the existing EC comics; they did not refer to the existing or deceased comics; they were not promoted to the more than 20,000 members of the EC Fan-Addict Club. The experiment in *EXTRA!* #3 was never explained to the readers of that magazine.

There were four PF titles: *SHOCK ILUSTRATED, CRIME ILLUSTRATED, TERROR ILLUSTRATED,* and *CONFESSIONS ILLUSTRATED,* published in that order.

CRIME AND TERROR followed very closely the content and style of the deceased New Trend comics, even adapting many old stories from those titles into the new format. *SHOCK ILLUSTRATED* started out as a magazine of "Adult Psychoanalytical Tales," somewhat similar to the *PSYCHO-ANALYSIS* comic book, but on seamier topics. The first issue contained three stories: 1) a teen-age girl addicted to dope and arrested for prostitution; 2) a couple engaging in suburban wife-swapping parties; 3) a leather jacketed juvenile delinquent thrill killer. *CONFESSIONS ILLUSTRATED* was adequately described by its title, and the stories have a dulling sameness throughout the two issues (they were all written by the same person), the art in *CONFESSIONS,* however, was excellent.

Response to the Picto-Fiction format was favorable, at least in the letters, but the first issue of *SHOCK ILLUSTRATED* (*SI*) did not sell very well. The editors attributed this to the story content, so with the second issue *SI* was converted into a basically crime magazine. However, one story in that issue (and in the legendary third issue) retained the emphasis on psychoanaytical matters.

Sales of the Picto-Fiction titles was very poor. When the first two cycles were complete, it was apparent that further issues would at best break even, and probably lose money. *SI* #3 was at the bindery when the axe fell.

Leader News declared bankruptcy.

Leader News (LN) was the distributor for the entire EC line, and had been ever since 1949. The economic arrangements in magazine publishing leave the publisher very much at the mercy of the distributor, because the income from an issue does not arrive until several months after the magazine leaves the stands. Not only was Gaines about to lose Picto-Fiction (which alone amounted to almost $80,000), but he figured to have sizeable additional losses as well.

So the picture was this. *SI #1* was ready to be bound and sent to the distributor. Gaines did not have the money to have the entire print run bound (approximately 200,000 to 250,000 copies). Even if he could raise the credit and find a new distributor, the title was certain to lose money. And so, to cut losses, the entire print run went to the scrap dealer except for approximately 100-200 copies, which were hand bound and sold or given away from the New York offices of EC. Gaines then turned his entire attention to *MAD,* the only survivor of the debacle.

We have no information as to whether or not subscription copies of *SI* #3 were mailed. The major distribution of *SI* #3 occured through NYC fans who obtained duplicate copies and then traded or sold them to fans with whom they had correspondence.

About a year ago, Sam Glavas of Kansas City attempted to take a census of *SI* #3. He found about 26 copies, 13 of which were in the hands of Gaines (12) and Feldstein (1). The remaining were scattered throughout fandom, with one to three copies being in the collections of various fans.

HOW I GOT MY COPY OF SHOCK ILLUSTRATED #3

In 1958, the original EC Fandom was breaking up (it later revived as part of the new fandom). I was seeking out various collectors in an attempt to fill out my collection. One fan was selling duplicate EC's which he had obtained from various fans and artists.

I ordered a batch of EC's, but he was unable to complete the order. It seemed that some of the copies which had been obtained from artists had been partially dissected in order to provide "swipe-file" material. So he sent a copy of *SI #3* for $2.50 as an unannounced alternate.

In 1972, at the EC Fan-Addict Convention, I sought out my benefactor (having owed him a letter for 14 years) in order to thank him for his foresight in having sent a copy of *SI #3.* He was a bit mystified at the whole bit, for he had forgotten that he had done this. The fan (who shall remain nameless here) still has three copies of the magazine in his collection, with slight color variations among the covers. He also supplied other fans with their copies in a similar way, according to information collected by Sam Glavas; perhaps time has mercifully erased the memory, for who would want to remember selling such a rarity for such a price?

I just hope he wasn't feigning forgetfulness, thinking that I wanted a refund!

WHY DID PICTO-FICTION FAIL?

The ultimate reason for the failure of the Picto-Fiction experiment was the bankruptcy of Leader News. But even before that event, it was apparent that the PF's were doomed to failure; they were only selling about 20% of their runs.

Why the poor response? Ten years or so later, James Warren would succeed very well with a similar concept in *CREEPY, EERIE* and *VAMPIRELLA,* using the same artists and sometimes the same stories!

I feel that Gaines went too far in divorcing these magazines from their comic book ancestry. First, the PF format is hard to read compared to the caption-balloon style of the comic book. The experiment in *EXTRA!* and the reader response proved unreliable as indices of salability. Such failures of "market research" dot American corporate history, such as the Edsel and (more recently) Frost 8/80 white whiskey. Those responding were, by and large, devoted EC fans who would praise *any* EC innovation; these opinions were worthless as appraisals of the new style.

Second, promotion through the existing New Direction comics and *MAD* magazine would have helped sales.

Of course, such an approach would have run grave risks of opposition from the same forces which had killed the New Trend. Perhaps Gaines felt that a close relationship was not possible in the climate of opinion then existing.

But he could have tried it.

THE MAGAZINE ITSELF

The cover of *SI #3* was painted by Rudy Nappi; slight differences in coloration of the cover occur on different copies, for unknown reasons. Cover text proclaims, "Introducing... PICTO-FICTION" (although the form had been around for two previous issues of the title) and "Adult Crime Stories" (which continued the move away from "psychoanalytical" tales featured in the first issue).

The production and circulation problems facing the Picto-Fiction magazines may be inferred from the multiplicity of dates which this issue bears. "May, 1956" appears on the front cover; "July, 1956" appears on the masthead of the title page (page 2); and "Spring" appears on the bottom of that page in the circulation statement.

Advertisements occupy the inside front cover ("Men!

"You . . . you still can't be sure, Henrietta," Milton said, stroking his chin. "You still need some sort of proof! Maybe . . . if you knew where he gets those pigeons . . . ?"

"Of course!" I whispered. "I could follow him! Tomorrow! When he goes out in the morning! Then, I'd not only know where those pigeons *go*, but I'd know what he does with the contents of those *cans!*"

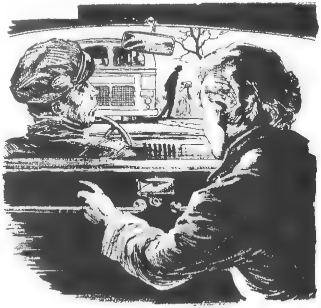
"That would be the proof you need, Henrietta," Milton smiled.

"Yes . . ." I nodded. "Yes . . ."

The next day, I waited until Wallace Durand left the Royal Arms Apartment Hotel. And I followed him.

He took a subway out of the city to the end of the line. Then, he caught a suburban bus. I followed the bus in a taxi.

"All right, driver," I told the hackie when I saw Mr. Durand disembark from the bus, "I'll get out here!"



I stayed out of sight far behind him as he made his way along a tree-lined street to a run-down old house. As he turned in and moved around to the rear, I heard the loud barking of dogs.

It was all suddenly so clear!

Behind the old house was a pigeon coop and a fenced-in kennel. I watched in horror as Wallace Durand untied the can from the pigeon that had arrived the night before and emptied its gory contents into the kennel of slobbering hungry hounds.

Send for This Money-Making Outfit FREE!"), the first page ("ZENITH'S BIG BARGAIN OFFER FOR STAMP COLLECTORS"), inside the back cover ("WE'LL RIPPLE YOUR BODY WITH MUSCLES AND LOAD T.N.T. IN YOUR FISTS"), and on the back cover ("HOW TO FIX *ANY* PART OF *ANY* CAR"). There is one house ad on page 25 which illustrates the covers of the sister Picto-Fiction titles. The remainder of the magazine consists of the table of contents (page 2), the letter page (page 26; includes a letter from Landon Chesney), and 52 pages of Picto-Fiction stories. The four stories are described below.

1. *CURIOSITY KILLED*; Al Feldstein, writer; Reed Crandall, artist; pp. 3 thru 14.

Synopsis: Henrietta Clayton suspects her neighbor in the apartment house, Wallace Durand, of murdering his wife, Emily, who was Henrietta's best friend. Henrietta and Emily had been drawn into a close friendship because of a similar nature; both are domineering wives. Emily returned home the previous night and has not been seen since; the elevator operator and front desk clerk have not seen her, although Wallace insists she has gone on a vacation. Henrietta's husband, Milton, is unimpressed by the situation, so she starts to spy on her neighbor in order to find enough proof to call the police. Although the body must be in the apartment, Wallace never leaves with anything suspicious; quite the contrary, he daily returns with a shoe box. Upon further investigation, Henrietta notices a scratching sound that comes from the box. That night, unable to sleep, she notices that Wallace releases a carrier pigeon from the balcony. She wakes her husband, who suggests that she check out this development by following Wallace the next day. She does so, and finds that Wallace goes to a suburban house with a pigeon coop; he enters the coop and returns with a can of flesh which he feeds to a small kennel of dogs. Upon returning home, she finds her husband unexpectedly home from work, acting uncharacteristically self-assured. He has a shoe box, and announces that he and Wallace jointly planned and financed the caper in order to free themselves from their nagging wives. Henrietta flees to the bedroom, but to no avail. The end, via a butcher knife.

Comment: This is a Picto-Fiction version of the second story in *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* #36, illustrated by George Evans originally. The text and dialogue are practically unchanged; the panel-by-panel breakdown is essentially identical (45 in *SI* #3; 44 in *TFC* #36). Although Crandall's art is very good, the original version by Evans seems to catch more of the flavor of the characters.

2. *THE DEMON*; John Larner, writer; Graham Ingels, artist; pp. 15-24.

Synopsis: Hardy is a newspaper reporter at the scene of a murder in a wax museum, the "Waxworks." The murder is an eerie one, in that the likely culprit, Ellis, an escaped lunatic, has just cut the throat of his ninth victim and left the body at the foot of an Higy of Himself! Hardy is contemptuous of the others who show their unease and "let that demon... fear... grow inside their minds." Later, joining his associates at a nearby cafe, Hardy is drawn into conversation on this point. The others propose a wager: for $100, Hardy is to spend the night alone in the Waxworks with only a single candle. He accepts. That night he sees the effigy of Ellis come alive; Ellis places him under the same hypnotic spell with which he has immobilized previous victims, and places his knife to Hardy's throat. In the morning, it is found that Hardy has died from fear, for Ellis was captured early the previous night in another part of town.

Comment: This is Graham Ingels' last published work for EC. It is less extravagantly stylish than most of his comic book art, but evokes an effective atmosphere nevertheless. It is set at the turn of the century, and Ingels drew the style of dress and interior decoration quite effectively.

3. *SIN DOLL*: Kris Daniels, writer; Jack Kamen, artist; pp. 27-46

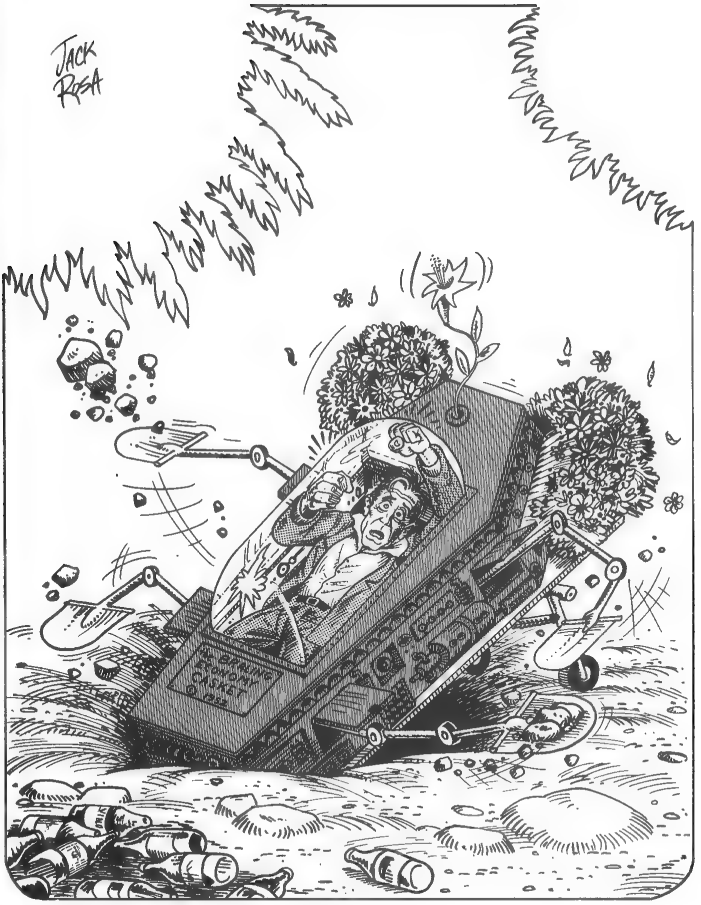
Synopsis: Laura March is a nymphomaniac. She is confronted by her hometown ex-boyfriend, who pulls a pistol. He shoots at Laura, then commits suicide. Laura survives, her childhood rag doll, Lorelei deflecting the bullet. The incident deeply shocks her, and she suffers a breakdown. While in the hospital, her doctor senses her severe emotional problem and gives her the name of a psychoanalyst. After another affair (despite her resolve to change her ways), she consults the doctor and enters analysis. The sources and nature of her emotional problem are thoroughly explored, including the attachment to the doll. The name of her doll is related to her illness; upon coming to an understanding of her problem, she discards the doll, a symbol of her unhappy past.

Comment: The nature and source of nymphomania as an illness are explored in a competent manner. Although appearing in an "adult" magazine, the mores of 1956 are obviously quite different from 1973 as to permissible illustration. Laura is never shown in less than a nightgown, and none of her male companions are ever shown in her apartment, much less her bed. Today, the art would certainly be more explicit, the story less competent. Artwise, Kamen did a good job on this one. He did more Picto-Fiction art than any other of the EC artists and adapted to the medium very well.

4. *ONE MAN'S MEAT*: Jack Oleck, writer; George Evans, artist; pp. 47-56.

Synopsis: Paul, an effeminate dress shop owner, is unhappily married to Myra, who is carrying on an affair with Marsh, a more masculine type. Paul's entreaties go for naught, as his style repels Myra. One day Myra finds that Marsh is not available. She is despondent for two weeks, as Marsh does not show up. Paul and Myra go to their lakeside cabin, where Paul tries once more to win back Myra's affection, and fails. After dinner, which Paul fussily prepares (one of his traits Myra dislikes), Myra declares that she intends to find Marsh and stay with him. She declares that she must have Marsh; Paul replies that there is no problem, for she just had him—for dinner!

Comment: Evans handled the Picto-Fiction medium very well.


JACK
ROSA

RAY B. AND E.C.

BY JAMES VAN HISE

The story of how E.C came to adapt many of Ray Bradbury's short stories is a well known one but an article about those adaptations would not be complete without repeating it just the same.

As any E.C. fan knows, as great as many of their stories were, not all of them were totally original. E.C. "stole" ideas from various sources including the science fiction magazines. They even did swipes of two H.P. Lovecraft stories. Their adaptations of Ray Bradbury started the same way, only that time they got caught!

The first story they adapted went unnoticed, that being "What The Dog Dragged In!" in VAULT OF HORROR #22 (which was actually "The Emissary" with the central characters altered).

They were discovered when in WEIRD FANTASY #13 they published a strip which they called "Home To Stay" but was in reality a clever reworking of the two Ray Bradbury stories "The Rocket Man" and "Kaleidoscope" into one tale.

A fan wrote Ray Bradbury and pointed this out to him whereupon Ray sent a pleasant letter to E.C. mentioning that he had noticed the adaptation of his story and that by some oversight they had forgotten to send him the adaptation fee. He also requested that in the future they put his copyright on the story to protect it. The following week he received a check and a request to do more adaptations, but this time he would receive full credit.

And receive full credit he did! E.C. went all out on future adaptations and even displayed his name on the cover of many of the issues which featured his stories. E.C. went on to do twenty-five legal adaptations of his stories, some of which became classics of comic art.

At the time the adaptations themselves met with mixed reactions as professional SF & horror stories tend to be a bit more complex than were the comics of the early 1950's. Some readers loved them, while others frankly admitted that they couldn't figure them out!

The letters column in WEIRD FANTASY #19 contains a typical cross-section of reader reaction. These two letters from it display the average reader reaction: "After reading your dramatization of Ray Bradbury's "There Will Come Soft Rain," I felt I had to write. I think it is the finest piece of work I have ever seen in any of your mags."

While another reader states, "We have long loved E.C. comics, but Ray Bradbury is awful. His stories don't make any sense... just wasted space in the books. We like to read E.C. mags but Bradbury has got to go!"

Needless to say he didn't and those adaptations which some readers felt "don't make sense" have been hailed from one end of comic fandom to the other. They introduced many readers to Bradbury's work at that time and in the mid-sixties introduced others through the two Ballantine Books reprints, THE AUTUMN PEOPLE and TOMORROW MIDNIGHT. Curiously enough, I myself had only been reading Bradbury for about a year when I latched on to those reprints and they furthered my own interest in Bradbury at the same time as I was just discovering the wonders of E.C. comics. It would be nice if Ballantine would reissue those books as the $5.00 and up price tag placed on them by many dealers now places them out of reach of many of the fans who would love them the most.

there will come soft rains...
THE SUN CAME OUT FROM BEHIND THE RAIN. THE HOUSE STOOD ALONE IN A CITY OF RUBBLE AND ASHES. THIS WAS THE ONE HOUSE LEFT STANDING AT NIGHT, THE RUINED CITY GAVE OFF A RADIOACTIVE GLOW WHICH COULD BE SEEN FOR MILES. THE ENTIRE WEST FACE OF THE HOUSE WAS BLACK, SAVE FOR FIVE PLACES. HERE, THE WHITE SILHOUETTE OF A MAN MOWED A LAWN. THERE, AS IN A PHOTOGRAPH, A WOMAN BENT TO PICK FLOWERS. STILL FARTHER OVER, THEIR IMAGES OUTLINED IN ONE TITANIC INSTANT, A SMALL BOY, HANDS FLUNG INTO THE AIR. HIGHER UP, THE IMAGE OF A THROWN BALL. AND OPPOSITE HIM, A GIRL, HANDS RAISED TO CATCH THE BALL WHICH NEVER CAME DOWN.
ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY RAY BRADBURY
THE FIVE SPOTS OF PAINT. THE MAN, THE WOMAN, THE CHILDREN, THE BALL REMAINED! THE REST WAS A

The following is an annotated index to the E.C. adaptations of stories by Ray Bradbury. For easy reference they will be listed by comic title group.

THE VAULT OF HORROR #22—Dec. 1951 - Jan. 1952—"What the dog dragged in!"—7 pages—artist: Jack Kamen.

An adaptation of "The Emissary" with the main characters changed. A fair job.

THE VAULT OF HORROR #29—Feb.-March 1953—"Let's Play Poison!"—7 pages—artist: Jack Davis.

A reverse of Bradbury's usual portrayal of children in stories. An excellent adaptation. Jack Davis outdoes himself on the art.

THE VAULT OF HORROR #31—June-July 1953—"The Lake"—6 pages—artist: Joe Orlando.

A very sensitive and powerful adaptation; one of the top three done by E.C. and one of the top three strips drawn by Orlando for E.C. as well! Cannot be praised too highly.

All artwork reprinted in this article is copyright E.C. Publications and William M. Gaines.

WEIRD FANTASY #13—May-June 1952—"Home To Stay" —6 pages—artist: Wally Wood.

A talented meshing of "The Rocket Man" and "Kaleidoscope' produces an even better story. Very moving. Wood's art is beautiful to the extreme. Excellent!

WEIRD FANTASY #17—Jan.-Feb. 1953—"There Will Come Soft Rains. . ."—7 pages—artist: Wally Wood.

Although this adaptation omits the poem by Sara Teasdale of the same name as the story (and which tends to give the story its meaning as well as lend it a certain haunting quality) it is still a marvelously visual tour-de-force by Wally Wood which most certainly does leave one breathless.

WEIRD FANTASY #18—March-April 1953—"Zero Hour" —7 pages—artist: Jack Kamen.

Although I'm not one of Jack Kamen's biggest fans, this story is well adapted and Jack Kamen does a bit better than the average job.

WEIRD FANTASY #19—May-June 1953—"King of the Grey Spaces!"—8 pages—artists: John Severin & Will Elder.

In anthologies this story has been retitled "R Is For Rocket." It's a story of the future and yet the characters are very much of today. A good adaptation of a good story. Severin and Elder's art looks somewhat dated by today's standards but is still quite effective.

WEIRD FANTASY #20—July-Aug. 1953—"I, Rocket"—7 pages—artists: Al Williamson & Frank Frazetta

A good adaptation of a story told by a rocketship! Artwork is rough in some panels but astoundingly beautiful in others.

WEIRD FANTASY #21—Sept.-Oct. 1953—"The Million Year Picnic"—7 pages—artists: Severin & Elder.

A good adaptation. Again, the style of this team looks somewhat dated now but it's still good.

GENEVIEVE STOOD IN THE OPEN DOOR OF THE SALON AS HE RAN ACROSS THE STREET. A BOX OF CREAM CHOCOLATES LAY OPEN IN HER ARMS. HER FINGERS, CLUDGING IT, WERE PLUMP AND PALE. HER FACE WAS ROUND AND TWICE. HER EYES WERE AS BIG AROUND AS THE BUTTONS OF THESE. SHE WAS SO LIPS AT ALL AND COMPENSATED THEM BY STEINLING ON A LARGE RED, CHEESE MOUTH
BRIBE!
WALTER GRIFFIN
IT'S LARY, FANE. HOW DO YOU DO?
NOW DO YOU DO?
SHE PUT OUT HER HAND. HE TOOK IT. HER FINGERS WERE STICKY WITH CHOCOLATE
SHE PLUCKED HER BROWS TO THIN ANTENNA LINES. HER HAIR WAS AN HEROIC MINUTE SHADE OF BROWN THAT HAD BEEN MADE ARE PEARANCE. HAPPINESS, AND HE KNEW IT, WAS SHE STUFFED HER CHEEKS WHILE SHE SPOKE
ARE YOU GENEVIEVE SELDOM?
ARE YOU WALTER GRIFFIN?

WEIRD FANTASY #22—Nov.-Dec. 1953—"The Silent Towns"—8 pages—artist: Reed Crandall.

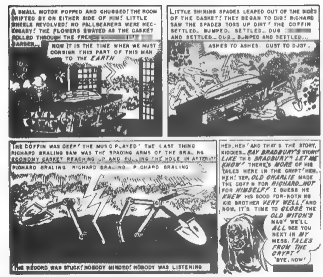
A rather offbeat tale for Bradbury as it's a comedy! An unusual story for E.C. and one of their best adaptations from both points of view of story and art. It's one of the few adaptations that has never been reprinted and that's unfortunate.

CRIME SUSPENSTORIES #15—Feb.-March 1953—"The Screaming Woman!"—7 pages—artist: Jack Kamen.

One of Bradbury's more traditional and typical stories. It's okay.

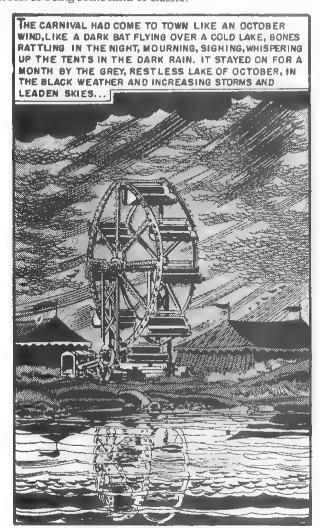
CRIME SUSPENSTORIES #17—June-July 1953—"Touch and Go"—8 pages—artist: Johnny Craig.

A crime story centering on the disintegration of the criminal's mind. It's different.


A SMALL MOTOR POPPED AND GHUBBED THE ROOM SHIFTED BY ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM. LITTLE SHELLS REVOLVED! NO PALL-BEARERS WERE NECESSARY! THE FLOWERS SWIRLED AS THE CASKET ROLLED THROUGH THE FRESH
NOW IT IS THE TIME WHEN WE MUST COMMAND THIS PART OF THIS MAN TO THE EARTH
LITTLE SHINING SPADES LEAPED OUT OF THE SIDES OF THE CASKET! THEY BEGAN TO DIG! RICHARD SAW THE SPADES TOSS UP DIRT! THE COFFIN SETTLED. BUMPED. SETTLED. DUG AND SETTLED. DUG. BUMPED AND SETTLED
ASHES TO ASHES. DUST TO DUST.
THE COFFIN WAS DEEP! THE WORD PLAYED. THE LAST THING RICHARD HEARING RAN WAS THE SINGING GRAY OF THE SKY. HE RECORDED EARTH REACHING UP AND FILLING THE HOLE IN AT FIRST
RICHARD BREATHING. RICHARD BREATHING. RICHARD BREATHING
HER MEN AND THERE'S THE STORY, BROOKS...BUT BRADBURY'S WAYS LIKE THIS BRADBURY'S LET ME KNOW". THERE'S MORE OF HIS TALES HERE IN THE CRYPT! HERE, NEXT TIME, OLD CRYPTKEEP MAKE THE CUTS IN FOR RICHARD...NOT FOR YOURSELF". I GUESS I'M GLAD HE'S GOOD FOR BOTH HIS BROTHER BOTH BOOKS. IT'S TIME FOR NOW, IT'S TIME TO LEAVE THE OLD WITCH WAS WELL. ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN MY WEEK. TALES FROM THE CRYPT. "BYE, NOW!"
THE RECORD WAS STUCK! NOBODY WEPT! NOBODY WAS LISTENING

HAUNT OF FEAR #16—Nov.-Dec. 1952—"The Coffin!"—7 pages—artist: Jack Davis.

A very strange little tale. More a cross between a crime suspense and a horror tale. Davis does a fine job on this bizarre tale of bizarre revenge. The last page must be given credit as being some kind of classic.


THE CARNIVAL HAD COME TO TOWN LIKE AN OCTOBER WIND, LIKE A DARK BAT FLYING OVER A COLD LAKE, BONES RATTLING IN THE NIGHT, MOURNING, SIGHING, WHISPERING UP THE TENTS IN THE DARK RAIN. IT STAYED ON FOR A MONTH BY THE GREY, RESTLESS LAKE OF OCTOBER, IN THE BLACK WEATHER AND INCREASING STORMS AND LEADEN SKIES...

Mars is Heaven!

THE SHIP CAME DOWN FROM SPACE. IT CAME DOWN FROM THE STARS AND THE SILENT GULFS OF SPACE. IT WAS A NEW SHIP, THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND. IT HAD FIRE IN ITS BELLY AND MEN IN ITS BODY, AND IT MOVED WITH CLEAN SILENCE, FIERY AND HOT. A CROWD HAD GATHERED AT ITS NEW YORK LAUNCHING SITE AND SHOUTED AND WAVED THEIR HANDS UP INTO THE SUNLIGHT... AND THE ROCKET HAD JERKED UP, BLOOMED OUT GREAT FLOWERS OF HEAT AND COLOR, AND RUN AWAY INTO SPACE ON THE *FIRST VOYAGE TO MARS!* AND NOW, IT WAS DECELERATING WITH METAL EFFICIENCY IN THE UPPER ZONES OF MARS'S ATMOSPHERE...

ADAPTED FROM A STORY BY

RAY BRADBURY

NAVIGATOR LUSTIG, ARCHAEOLOGIST HINKSTON, AND CAPTAIN JOHN BLACK WATCHED MARS SWING UP UNDER THEM...

THE SHIP LANDED SOFTLY ON A LAWN OF GREEN GRASS. OUTSIDE, UPON THE LAWN, STOOD AN IRON DEER. FURTHER UP THE LAWN, A TALL BROWN VICTORIAN HOUSE SAT IN THE QUIET SUNLIGHT. AN OLD SWING WHICH WAS HOOKED INTO THE PORCH CEILING SWUNG BACK AND FORTH, BACK AND FORTH, IN A LITTLE BREEZE...

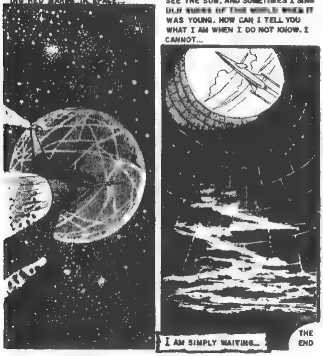
COPYRIGHT, 1948, BY RAY BRADBURY

HAUNT OF FEAR #18—March-April 1953—"The Black Perris!"—7 pages—artist: Jack Davis.

A very atmospheric little story. Bradbury took this story and expanded it into SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES. An excellent adaptation and good art by Davis but somehow I would have rather seen someone like Joe Orlando on this one. Still very good but has never been reprinted.
WEIRD SCIENCE #17—Jan.-Feb. 1953—"The Long Years"—7 pages—artist: Joe Orlando.

A fine adaptation with beautiful art by Orlando from his peak period.
WEIRD SCIENCE #18—March-April 1953—"Mars Is Heaven!"—8 pages—artist: Wally Wood.

Another excellent adaptation and Wood's art makes it a perfect one. Sheer beauty panel after panel and it's the type of story that is so convincing as to keep you constantly guessing. Truly astounding!


THE SUN SETS. THE STARS WHEEL UPON THE NIGHT SKY. FAR OUT THERE IS A WINK OF LIGHT. ANOTHER ROCKET IS COMING, LEAVING RED MARS IN SPACE...
I LIVE IN A WELL. I LIVE LIKE SMOKE IN A WELL. LIKE VAPOR IN A STONE THROAT. OVERHEAD, I SEE THE COLD STARS OF NIGHT AND MORNING, AND I SEE THE SUN, AND SOMETIMES I SEND IN MY THOUGHTS TO THE WORLD WHEN IT WAS YOUNG. HOW CAN I TELL YOU WHAT I AM WHEN I DO NOT KNOW. I CANNOT...
I AM SIMPLY WAITING...
THE END

WEIRD SCIENCE #19—May-June 1953—"The One Who Waits"—7 pages—artist: Al Williamson.

Probably the strangest and most thought provoking of the E.C. adaptations. Very faithful to the original and Williamson's art is very gentle and ethereal, perfectly fitting to the story. Among the top five in quality and excellence of the E.C. adaptations.
WEIRD SCIENCE #20—July-Aug. 1953—"Surprise Package"—7 pages—artist: Jack Kamen.

Bradbury's original title on this is "Changeling." Sort of a sequel to "Marionettes, Inc." Not bad.
WEIRD SCIENCE #21—Sept.-Oct. 1953—"Punishment Without Crime"—7 pages—artist: Jack Kamen.

A thought provoking story years ahead of its time. Deserved a much better artist than Kamen although his art does tend to add to the oppressive atmosphere of the story.
WEIRD SCIENCE #22—Nov.-Dec. 1953—"Outcast of the Stars"—7 pages—artist: Joe Orlando.

This story is anthologized under the title "The Rocket." A fine adaptation of a story which shows a technologically advanced future in which poverty still exists. The matter-of-fact way this is treated makes it all the more startling. A gentle story about gentle people. Very good Orlando art. One of the best.
TALES FROM THE CRYPT #34—Feb.-March 1953—"There Was An Old Woman!"—7 pages—artist: Graham Ingels.

A curious little character study of an old woman who refuses to die, even after she's dead! Very fine Ingels art.
TALES FROM THE CRYPT #36—June-July 1953—"The Handler"—7 pages—artist: Graham Ingels.

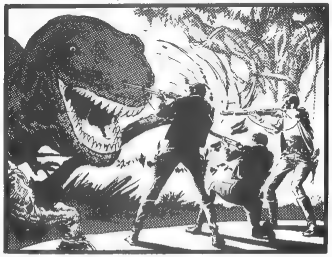
This one is so, um, "sick" that you'd swear it was written by Gaines or Feldstein. The most EC-ish story Bradbury ever wrote. An exercise in black humor which succeeds marvelously. Not for the squeamish. Graham Ingels' artwork is perfect, line for line. A good story but seldom reprinted nowadays.
SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES #7—Feb.-Mrch 1953—"The Small Assassin!"—7 pages—artist: George Evans.

One of the most chilling stories Bradbury ever wrote! Evans' art is perfect for this as his realism adds that extra touch of horror. The final scene's exercise in restraint (as it cuts off just before...) makes it all the more devastating! One of the best. A knockout!
SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES #9—June-July 1953—"The October Game"—8 pages—artist: Jack Kamen.

Although many people like this story I've never been that wild about it. Kamen's art doesn't improve it any. It's a psychological horror tale. It's okay.
WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY #23—March 1954—"The Flying Machine"—6 pages—artist: Bernie Krigstein.

Krigstein's unique art style does much with this story. One of Bradbury's more symbolic tales. Is widely taught and discussed in schools today. Bradbury himself said of this adaptation, "The Flying Machine is the finest single piece of art-drawing I've seen in the comics in years. Beautiful work; I was so touched and pleased..."

THE RIFLES CRACKED AGAIN. THEIR SOUND WAS LOST IN SHRIEK AND LIZARD THUNDER. THE MONSTER TWITCHED ITS JEWELER'S HANDS DOWN TO FONDLE THE MEN, TO TWIST THEM IN HALF, TO CRUSH THEM LIKE BERRIES, TO CRAM THEM INTO ITS TEETH AND ITS SCREAMING THROAT. ITS BOULDER-STONE EYES LEVELED WITH THE MEN. THEY SAW THEMSELVES MIRRORED, FIRED AT THE METALIC EYELIDS, THE BLAZING BLACK IRIS . . .



WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY #25—Sept. 1954—"A Sound Of Thunder"—7 pages—artists: Al Williamson & Angelo Torres.

Although the adaptation omits the last lines of the story (which is what the title actually referred to) it is still an ef-

fective piece. Final lines were omitted probably due to anti-violence trend pressuring the comics at that time. E.C.'s changing of the names of the presidential candidates referred to in the story so as to lampoon Truman is an interesting touch, and yet one which I've never seen discussed about in regard to this adaptation. More than any of the others, Al Feldstein seemed to be in love with Bradbury's prose in this story as his captions are often so large they practically smother the tiny space left for the art in some panels. The art is still quite appealing but it really didn't seem to have room to breathe and properly swell to life until Russ Cochran's reprint of this strip in EC PORTFOLIO FIVE, which is much larger than the comic.

Another aspect of E.C.'s adaptation of "A Sound Of Thunder" is that omitting the last lines is not the only change made in the story. The original story indicated that the time travellers wore atmosphere suits of some kind which would be in keeping not to contaminate the past with anything that might change the future. But E.C. ignored this for some reason, as the panel from the story indicates.

So not all of the E.C. adaptations were perfect, but even those were still fantastic.

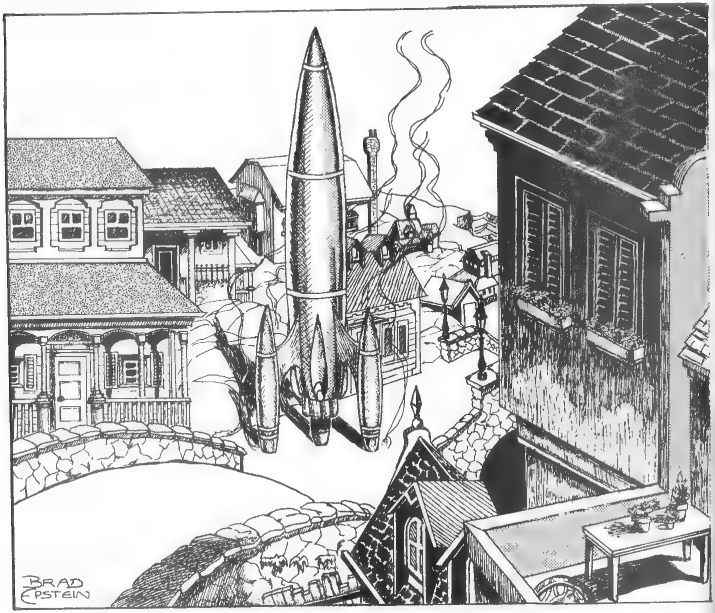
The best of E.C.'s adaptations were miles above anything else being done in comics at that time as no other publisher was that concerned then about stories that were that good or which needed to be illustrated that well. Those adaptations, by and large, still rank higher than most of what is being done in comics even today!

If I had to pick the best five of these adaptations I would choose "The Lake," "There Will Come Soft Rains," "Mars Is Heaven!," "The One Who Waits" and "A Sound Of Thunder," although these are not necessarily to be taken as order of preference. These choices are not based so much on the perfection of the adaptation so much as they are based on the effectiveness of story combined with art, which is really the final test for the success of any comic strip.

Ray Bradbury described these stories best when in the introduction to TOMORROW MIDNIGHT he said, "We are still the greatest mystery and we shall spend several million more years trying to figure ourselves out.

"These stories then, are ways of figuring a part of myself, which means also a part of you, since we all run in the same human race together. I hope you like them."

We do, Ray, we most certainly do.



STRIPS

Ah... the comic strips. Amateur works by hopeful young artists and writers. Many of whom would go on to fill the comic book pages of the future, others of whom would slink away never to be seen again. And it was not always the best who lingered and the least accomplished who disappeared. Often it was factors such as other careers or family obligations that were the determining factor. Among those who stuck it out we number such popular giants as Jim Starlin, Rich Buckler and Alan Weiss.

RBCC published many of the most creative from Steve Fabian to Mike Zeck to Steve Bissette. One of the most famous was Don Rosa. And perhaps the most popular of his works was "Lost In The Andes", a part of his *Pertwillaby Papers*. In recent years he has finally begun to find an audience and Fantagraphics publishes his *Comics and Stories* but here we reproduce them just as they originally saw print.

One of the most unique series of all time was Ron Wilber's *Twilight Of The Heroes*. His renderings are incredible, at once absolutely realistic and totally comedic. His mixture of real elements with the fantastic is expert. When he parodies a popular icon it is perfect and only after he brings it to its conclusion is the demise obvious. One asks why it could not be recognized before being pointed out. In the course of the 32 page series virtually every symbol of comic books is touched upon and every genre of comics is gently savaged. When the series finally reaches its almost funny conclusion we are shaken and touched. It is indeed the perfect element to end our book upon. The power of fanish work is unquestionable.

the Pertwillaby Papers

Originally published in KENTUCKY KERNAL, Sept.-Dec. 1973

Dan Reed

Script & dialogue consultants: Ron Weinberg & Ray Foushee

LOST IN (an alternate section of) THE ANDES

LANCELOT PERTWILLABY ☆☆☆... OUR HERO ☆☆☆
ERUDITE, WARLDLY, INQUISITIVE, ALL-ROUND GOOD GUY AND TOTALLY UNCONCERNED WITH ALL OF THE ABOVE...
FEATHER FLUFFNUTHIN ...LANCE'S GIRLFRIEND
☆ POSSESSOR ☆ OF INTUITION, DEVOTION, TRUST, RESOURCEFULNESS & A GOOD BODY.
PROF. VIKTOR DIMITRIUS SMYTE, P.H.D... (A.K.A. "OL' V.D.")
LANCE'S PERENNIAL ANTAGONIST... MASTER OF MYRIAD SCIENTIFIC REALMS & CONNOISSEUR OF UNMITIGATED HASTINESS.
PROF. GERALD ATRIX "GERRY" TO HIS FRIENDS
EXPEDITION LEADER, NOTED NONAGENARIAN ARCHEOLOGY EXPERT, AND BLATANT SWIPE OF U.P.A.'S "MR. MAGOO."
SCHUYLER RHATCH III. LANCE'S DORM ROOMMATE
SLIMEY, DESPICABLE, PAMPERED, POMPOUS, UTTERLY WITHOUT REDEEMING SOCIAL VALUE..... FRIEND OF PROF SMYTE.

EPISODE 67:

CRASH
CLATTER
CLATTER
OH, HARD CHEESE! SUCH A CLUMSY OCCURENCE AS THIS CAN ONLY SERVE TO TARNISH MY IMAGE.
AND AFTER PROF. ATRIX TRUSTED ME TO TAKE CARE OF CATALOGING THESE OLD EXAMPLES OF ANCIENT INCAN POTTERY FOR THE ARCHAEOLOGY DEPT. STOREROOM.
ON THE OTHER HAND, IT'S IMPROBABLE THAT ANY MEMBER OF THE 1899 EXPEDITION THAT PROCURED THIS COLLECTION WILL NOTE THE ABSENCE OF THIS PARTICULAR ITEM, ANYHOW.
NEXT: A DISCOVERY!!!

EPISODE 68:

WHILE CATALOGING SOME BOOTY LOOTED FROM ANTIQUITIES FROM AN 1899 INCAN EXPEDITION, PROF. ATRIX PERTWILLABY HAS HAD A SLIGHT ACCIDENT.

THIS WAS A RELATIVELY MINOR RELIC FROM THE INCAN IMPERIALIST ERA; NONETHELESS I SHOULD HAVE BEEN MORE CAREFUL IN HANDLING IT.
BUT HOLD! WHAT'S THIS BAKED INTO THE BASE OF THE VESSEL?
Dan Reed
A BEATEN-METAL PLAQUE OF SOME SORT, WITH SOME INSCRIPTIONS ON THE CONVEX SIDE... BUT WAIT—THIS ISN'T JUST ANY METAL... WHY, LANCE OLD BOY, THIS IS...
GOLD!
TO BE CONTINUED!

EPISODE 69: WHEN WE LAST SAW LANCE HE WAS EXAMINING A GOLD PLAQUE CONTAINED A HIDDEN GOLD PLAQUE CONTAINED REMEM.

MOST CURIOUS! THIS COULD INDICATE THAT WE HAVE SOMETHING HERE OF GREATER WORTH THAN ANYONE MAY HAVE HERETOFORE IMAGINED.

PERHAPS A CONFERENCE WITH PROF. ATRIX WOULD BE IN ORDER...

TIBETAN ANTIQUITIES AFICIONADO

DEAD GUY

CONSIDERING HE'S THE ONLY SURVIVING MEMBER OF THAT 1899 PERUVIAN EXPEDITION, PERHAPS HE CAN SHED SOME LIGHT ON THIS DISCOVERY.

PROF. GERALD ATRIX

ARCHAEOLOGIST

CAN I SEE YOU FOR A MOMENT, PRO—

ONF! IS SOMEONE AT THE DOOR? COME IN... COME RIGHT IN... DON'T BE SHY!

TO BE CONTINUED...

EPISODE 70: LANCE IS IN THE OFFICE OF PROFESSOR GERALD ATRIX WHERE HE HOPES TO CONFER WITH THE MONUMENTAL ABOUT THE DISCOVERY HE (LANCE) JUST MADE...

PROFESSOR, I REGRET TO REPORT THE DEMISE OF ONE OF OUR INCAN ARTIFACTS; HOWEVER AS A RESULT I STUMBLED ACROSS SOMETHING WHICH MAY BE OF INTEREST.

OH, LANCELOT. IT'S YOU M'BOY! I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU UNTIL YOU GOT UP CLOSE.

WELL...EH...PROFESSOR, I JUST WANTED TO SHOW YOU THIS GOLD PLAQUE I FOUND, AND—

ARE YOU NERVOUS, BOY? YOUR HAND IS PERSPIRING.

...AND ASK IF YOU HAD ANY THEORIES AS TO ITS SIGNIFICANCE.

PLAQUE? OH YES. OBVIOUSLY AN EXAMPLE OF EARLY PHOENICIAN METAL-WORK... BUT THE LANGUAGE SEEMS TO TOTALLY BAFFLE ME... PROBABLY ARCHAIC.

NO, NO PROFESSOR...HERE!

NEXT WEEK! THE PLAQUE'S SECRET!

EPISODE 71: PROF. GERALD ("GERRY") ATRIX IS EXAMINING A GOLDEN PLAQUE WHICH LANCE DISCOVERED IN A CAVE IN PERU...

SORRY ABOUT THE POT PROFESSOR BUT...

TUT, TUT. DON'T CONCERN YOURSELF WITH THAT OLD STEW POT M'BOY. DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS IS?!

THE ETCHINGS ON THE CONVEX SIDE OF THIS PLAQUE FORM A MAP OF THE PERUVIAN ANDES ...AND UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, IT REVEALS A SECRET ROUTE TO THE LEGENDARY TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC, THE SON OF THE SUN?!?!?!

"TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC"?

CORRECT, LAD! WOULD YOU HELP ME UP MY BOY! I SEEM TO HAVE OVERSHOT MY CHAIR.

THANK YOU, LANCELOT... I CAME ACROSS THE LEGEND IN AN OBSCURE VOLOME OF INCAN HISTORY BY THE SPANIARD GARCILASO de la VEGA! AND IF IT'S ONLY HALF TRUE, WE'VE COME ACROSS THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND OF THE MILLENIUM?!?

TOMORROW: A TALE OF TREASURE!

EPISODE 72: PROF. GERALD ("GERRY") ATRIX IS RELATING THE STORY OF THE SEARCH FOR THE TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC - THE SON OF THE SUN!

IT'S A TALE OF GREAT INTRIGUE. AS THE STORY GOES THE EMPEROR TOPA INCA YUPANQUI, WHO RULED THE INCANS AT THE APOGEE OF THEIR POWER AND GLORY, BEGAN CONSTRUCTION OF A MAJESTIC SECRET TEMPLE LATE IN THE 15th CENTURY...

"SITUATED ON A VIRTUALLY INACCESSIBLE MOUNTAIN PEAK, IT TOOK UNTIL 1531 TO COMPLETE THE STRUCTURE. AT THAT TIME THE UNSCRUPULOUS SPANISH CONQUEROR PIZARRO WAS PILLAGING THE INCAN EMPIRE WITH VIOLENCE, COERCION & EXTORTION. HIS PRIME TOOL OF GREED..... AFTER IMPRISONING THE CURRENT EMPEROR, ATAHUALPA, HE DEMANDED AN IMMENSE RANSOM OF GOLD, BUT THERE WERE FORCES AT WORK IN THE EMPIRE WHICH DECREED THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE SO EASILY ACCOMPLISHED!"

TO BE CONTINUED...

EPISODE 73: PROF. GERALD "GERRY" ATRIX ENCOUNTERS THE MYSTERIOUS LOST INCAN TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC, THE SON OF THE SUN???

PIZARRO IMPRISONED EMPERDA ATAHUALPA AND DEMANDED A PRODIGIOUS RANSOM OF GOLD, BUT LOYALISTS OF HUASCAR, THE EMPEROR WHO HAD BEEN DEPOSED BY ATAHUALPA, HAD OTHER IDEAS.

"REPUSING TO PAY ATAHUALPA'S RANSOM, THEY MOVED THE VAST BULK OF THE INCAN TREASURE TO THE SECRET TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC — THE LOCATION OF WHICH WAS KNOWN TO BUT A FEW."

"PIZARRO NEVER WAS ABLE TO LOCATE THE NOW-HIDDEN TREASURE AND UNFORTUNATELY ATAHUALPA WAS MUCH THE WORSE FOR IT."

HUASCAR'S MEN DIED WITHOUT EVER REVEALING THEIR SECRET & THERE, LANCELOT, IS WHERE THE STORY ENDED... AT LEAST UNTIL YOU DISCOVERED THIS GOLDEN PLAQUE!

TO BE CONTINUED...

Del Rather

EPISODE 74: WHAT DEVILISH SCHEME HAS BEEN HATCHED BY THE MYSTERIOUS "DOCTOR" WHO BEGAN 3 DAYS AGO (CA. 5 MINUTES EASTON COMIC STRIP TIME). LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE PROF.!!

BUT PROFESSOR, WHAT IN THE NAME OF ZEUS ARE YOU DRIVING AT?

THE POINT IS, LANCELOT, THIS GOLDEN PLAQUE THAT YOU FOUND DELINEATES THE SECRET ROUTE TO THE TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC — RICHEST TREASURE-TROVE IN THE WORLD!

Del Rather

FASCINATING, PROFESSOR! WHAT'S OUR NEXT STEP?

WE'LL NEED HELP! I'LL CALL UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT ADRIAN MORTIMOUS TO SEE ABOUT FINANCING AN EXPEDITION BASED ON THIS REVELATION.

HELLO? HELLO? BLASTED PHONE COMPANY MUST STILL BE ON STRIKE!

HERE, PROFESSOR TRY THIS PHONE.

ASTAN MO'PHUS' OFFICE.

HELLO? I MUST TALK TO ADRIAN! PUT HIM ON IMMEDIATELY! THIS IS BIG! DON'T TARRY WOMAN! HURRY!!!

TO BE CONTINUED...

EPISODE 75: AS YOU RECALL, WE LEFT OFF LAST TIME AS PROF. ATRIX WAS CALLING UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT ADRIAN MORTIMOUS

HELLO, ADRIAN... THAT YOU THERE? I'M CALLING TO SEE IF WE CAN ARRANGE FINANCING FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION TO THE PERUVIAN ANDES. LANCELOT PERTWILLABY CAME ACROSS A DISCLOSURE WHICH MAY PROVE TO BE QUITE SIGNIFICANT.

OOOH, SORRY GERRY! I'M AFRAID YOUR DEPT. USED UP ITS ENTIRE RESEARCH ALLOTMENT ON THAT FIELD TRIP TO THE MUSEUM IN MUNCIE.

WELL ADRIAN, I SIMPLY MUST ARRANGE SOME SORT OF FINANCING!

HOLD 'ER THERE, GER. THERE'S ONE CHANCE. THE ONLY DEPT. WHICH HAS NOT AS YET EXHAUSTED ITS RESEARCH APPROPRIATIONS IS THE DEPT. OF PSYCHOMEDICAL & NEUROMEDICAL SURGERY. NOW WERE YOU TO CONTACT DEPT. HEAD PROF. V.D. SMYTHE YOU MAY BE ABLE TO COME TO SOME ARRANGEMENT.

A. MORTIMOUS UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

THANK YOU ADRIAN, I'LL LOOK INTO IT.

I DON'T KNOW THIS PROF. SMYTHE — BUT I'M SURE HE'S A DECENT SORT.

TO BE CONTINUED IN MONDAY'S!!

EPISODE 76: AS WE REJOIN OUR HERO, LANCELOT PERTWILLABY, HE IS DELIGHTFULLY INFORMING FEATHER OF HIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY...

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ORDER DRINKS, SIR?

YES, WAITER; A LARGE GLASS OF MILK FOR FEATHER HERE AND I'LL HAVE THE SAME WITH THE INCLUSION OF A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA.

BRANDY, SIR?

BOSCO, WAITER.

CLINK

YES, FEATHER, PROF. ATRIX FEELS THAT AN EXPEDITION TO PERU IS IN ORDER TO CHECK OUT THE EXISTENCE OF THE LOST TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC, THE SON OF THE SUN.

HOW EXCITING LANCEY!

AND I'M FAIRLY SURE THAT YOU AND I MAY GO ALONG AS ASSISTANTS FOR SCHOOL CREDIT.

WONDERFUL! AND THEY'RE HAVING A SALE ON PERUVIAN EXPEDITIONARY OUTFITS AT "MR. BRUCE'S BAZAAR."

BIZARRE IS RIGHT,

WHAT AN ADVENTURE! THIS WILL BE, LANCEY!

HMMM

TO BE CONTINUED...

EPISODE 77: WHILE LANCE & FEATHER ARE SCHEMING PLANS FOR THEIR FORTH-COMING ADVENTURE, SCHNEER-MANN'S CHARLIE SMYTE ARE ENJOYING A FEW LEVELS.

I HAFF MADE ARRANGEMENTS TA TRANSFER DER NEUROSURGERY DEPT. RESEARCH FUND TO DER ARCHAEOLOGY DEPT. FOR ZIS EXPEDITION DEY PLAN. I ALSO STIPULATED ZAT I MUST AKKOMPANY DER TRIP TO PREVENT WASTEFUL EXPENDITURES UND STUFF LIKE DOT.

AHA! AND YOU WILL TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SETTLE OUR SCORE WITH PERTWILLABY.
EXAKTLY! YOU WILL AKKOMPANY ME AS MINE ASSISTANT, UND TOGEDDER VE VILL DISKREDIT PERTWILLABY IN ANY VAY VE KAN.

EPISODE 78: ALL PLANS WERE MADE AND ALL ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR THAT EVENING'S START-O-CRUISER BOARD FOR LIMA.

PROF. SMYTE, I WANT TO ALSO LET YOU KNOW THAT IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES REGARDING OUR EXPEDITION I CAN SUPPLY ALL OF THE PERTINENT INFORMATION.
YA.

EPISODE 79: OUR DARKNESS PERSONAE ARE DEPARTING FOR LIMA ON A 1949 BOEING STARTO-CRUISER

I HOPE YOU'VE PLANNED OUR VENDETTA CAREFULLY, PROFESSOR ...THIS PERTWILLABY IS QUITE AN ASTUTE FELLOW.
YA, BUT ZIS TIME VE VILL NOT FAIL, HERR ROATCH.

GOLLY, LANCEY. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER BEEN ON AN AIRPLANE? IT'S JUST LIKE EVERYONE SAYS... ALL THE PEOPLE LOOK LIKE ANTS!
BUT FEATHER.. WE HAVEN'T TAKEN OFF YET!

YES, BUT...
Dal Rae
I THINK THEY'VE GOTTEN ALL OF THE UNIVERSITY'S EXPEDITIONARY EQUIPMENT ABOARD NOW. WE SHOULD BE DEPARTING MOMENTARILY.

EPISODE 80: OUR CAST OF CHARACTERS IS ABOARD A 1949 BOEING STARTO-CRUISER HEADING FOR LIMA, PERU.

IN THE INTERIM I'LL TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE MAP ON THE PLAQUE IN ORDER TO FURTHER ACQUAINT MYSELF WITH THE ROUTE TO THE LOST TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC, THE SON OF THE SUN.

ONCE THERE, WE..... WAIT A SECOND. THERE ARE SOME CRYPTIC MARKS HERE WHICH WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY OVERLOOKED!
YET ANOTHER DISCOVERY ALL TAKE IN MANHATTA!

EPISODE 81: LANCE HAS SPENT A SLEEPLESS NIGHT ABOARD THE 1941 STRATO-CRUISER TRANSCRIBING SAME HERVEY DISCOVERED MARKINGS ON HIS COUCHET'S PANSHE...

FEATHER, I'VE DECIPHERED THE REMAINING MARKS ON THIS PLAQUE AND THEY SUGGEST AN ENTIRELY NEW FACET OF THE TEMPLE!

WHAT? WHAT???

VAAR SHYTZ... I TAKE IT YOU'VE DECIDED ON A PLAN OF ACTION?

YA, HERR ROATCH! I HAFF DECIDED! A HIJACK ISS DER TING!

A HIJACK? YA, YA, YA. I KANT BUT YOU CANT... SKUTTLE DER EXPEDITION BESMIRCHING DER PER-TWILLABY NAME IN DER PROCESS, DEN I REGAIN MINE SEAT UND DISPOSE OF MINE NEEVER DISPOSE IN DER ENSUING KHAOS!

FEATHER? THIS PLAQUE? IT INDICATES THAT THE LOST TEMPLE ALSO CONTAINS A...

LANCEY, WHO'S THAT MYSTERIOUS STRANGER WALKING TOWARD THE COCKPIT?

CONTINUED

EPISODE 82: WITH REL HERVEY D. SCUTTLE LANCE'S EXPEDITION VICTOR DIMITRIUS SMYTE HAS HIJACKED THE AIRSHIP, TAKING IT OFF ITS COURSE BY STRIKING A FALSE NOTE...

ACHTUNG, GENTLEMEN! YOU VILL RESPECTFULLY TAKE ZIS PLANE TO BERLIN ...UND YOU VILL LIKE IT!

WELL, FRANK, THIS REALLY, TEARS IT. Y'KNOW WOT I MEAN?

I'M WITH YOU TED — WE DON'T GET PAID ENOUGH TO FLY THIS OLD CRATE ON THE LIMA ROUTE AS IT IS.

UH... FOLKS, WE'RE REALLY SORRY, BUT YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN FROM HERE ON OUT, Y'KNOW WOT I MEAN? FRANK AND I — WE'VE JUST ABOUT HAD IT WITH THIS HIJACK BUSINESS. SEE YA GONNA GROUND.

HERR ROATCH... I FEAR ZAT YOUR HIJACK PLAN HAS GONE SOMEWHAT AWRY.

HOLEY MOLEY! NOW WOT?

EPISODE 83: FACED WITH SMYTE'S STAGED HIJACK ATTEMPT, THE DARELESS PILOTS HAVE FLOWN THE AIRSHIP INTO THE COCKPIT... NOT TO MENTION THE PLANE ITSELF!

LANCEY? THE STEWARDESS SAID WE'D FIND OUR PARACHUTES UNDER OUR SEATS, BUT NONE OF US HAVE ONE! WHERE ARE THEY??

I WOULD SAY OUR NOTICEABLE LACK OF SAFETY EQUIPMENT IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT THE 5 OF US ARE TRAVELLING 5TH CLASS

5TH CLASS?? I NEVER HEARD OF IT!

YES... A VERY INEXPENSIVE RATE MADE NECESSARY BY THE EXPEDITION'S LACK OF FUNDS. IT PUTS OUR SAFETY ON A RATING SCALE, BARELY ABOVE THAT OF THE LUGGAGE.

LANCE, LOOK!

...OR MAYBE IT WAS 6TH CLASS...

PERTWILLABY! ONE OF US HAS TO TAKE OVER THE CONTROLS OF THIS PLANE!

TO BE CONTINUED

EPISODE 84: THE PUNTS & EXTRANEOUS PASSENGERS HAVING SAFELY BAILED OUT OF THE AIRSHIP, THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF OUR 5 PINNACITE-LESS EXPEDITION MEMBERS IN DIRE NEED OF PATRIOTIC DUTYING LESSONS...

LANCE, IF YOU'VE SIMPLY GOT TO DO SOMETHING!

RIGHT! FEATHER, FOLLOW ME TO THE COCKPIT... I'LL NEED THE MOST CAPABLE HELP I CAN FIND!

OOOH NOOO! WE'RE DOOMED! WE'RE GONNA' DIE!!! FATHER'S GOING TO LOSE HIS DEDUCTION!

SHOT OF, HERR ROATCH! HALFF YOU NA DIGNITY! I THOT YOU VERE MADE OF GOOT KLEAN ARYAN STOCK.

OOOOOH LANCE... IT'S ALL SO CONFUSING!

NOW, FEATHER IT'S NOT SO BAD. AT THIS POINT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE HAVE TO REMEMBER IS TO KEEP THIS PLANE

STABILIZED AT ALL COSTS...

EPISODE 85: OUR HERO TAKES REPRIMAND FOR RECKLESS FLYING AND ACCEPTS HIS FIRST FLYING STRATO-CRUISER ASSIGNMENT. IT ATTEMPT AN AD LIB LANDING IN THE WILDS OF THE UPPER AMAZON JUNGLE!!

PULL UP!! PULL UP!!!
D.J. Ross
VROOM!!
CRUNCH!
MOTHER
I'VE HARF NO TIME FOR SENTIMENTAL RAMBLINGS ABOUT YOUR MATERNAL ENGAGE ... PREPARE TO DIE, LIKE A MAN!!
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GOING TO GET A CRASH COURSE IN LANDING A PLANE, LANCEY.
I HOPE YOUR CHOICE OF AD-JECTIVES IS NOT A PORTENT OF THINGS TO COME.
BRACE YOURSELF, FEATHER! WE'RE GOING DOWN!
THE PUBLIC IS CORDIALLY INVITED, TO A SLIGHT FLAME ON MANAGEMENT

EPISODE 86: WHEN WE LEFT OFF LAST TIME WE WERE IN THE MIDST OF A DOGFIGHT (SEE PREVIOUS EPISODES).

EPISODE 87: IT IS IN THE AFTERMATH OF A DECIDEDLY TURBULENT AVIATION DISASTER THAT WE FIND OUR HERO AND CHARACTERS... IF ANY.

D.J. Ross
FEATHER! QUICK! HELP ME LIFT THIS SCINTILLA-IGNITION "PRATT & WHITNEY" R-2180 SERIES E-12 TURBINE OFF OF PROF. SMYTE'S FACE.
ACH DU LIEBER
...AND THERE'S SCHNEER ROATCH... BUT WHERE'S PROF. ATRIX??
ZZZZZZZ-
OH, STEWARDESS; I'LL HAVE MY 2 SOFT-BOILED EGGS NOW, PLEASE.
TO BE CONTINUED...

EPISODE 88: IN THE THICK OF THE AMAZON JUNGLE AMID THE SPLINTERING WRECKAGE OF THEIR ILL-FATED AIRSHIP, OUR HERO'S SEARCH FOR ADVENTURE CONTINUES!

LANCE, YOU'VE DONE IT AGAIN! WERE ALL SAFE!
IT WAS NOTHING FEATHER DONE ; BUT WERE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS YET, MUCH LESS THE JUNGLE.
AMAZON JUNGLE To THE EAST. ANDES TO THE WEST... THE PROXIMITY OF RAIN-FOREST & MOUNTAIN SUGGESTS THAT WE'VE CRASHED IN THE PROVINCE OF ACRE IN WESTERN BRAZIL.
HERR PERTVILLABY, I DO NOT KARE WHERE WE ARE — GETTING OUT FROM HERE IST MINE ONLY KONCERN — WHERE IS DER NEAREST OUTPOST OF CIVILIZATION??
IN MY BEST ESTIMATION, WERE WITHIN RANGE OF THE TOWN OF CRUZEIRO DO SUL, BUT IN ALL DUE RESPECT PROF. SMYTE, I BELIEVE WE MUST HEAD DIRECTLY FOR THE ANDES & THE LOST TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC!?
D.J. Ross
HERE'S A PHOTING OF WITH

EPISODE 89: OUR DISPLACED BAND OF HEROES ARE FACED WITH THE IMMEDIATE DESTINATION, THE NEAREST OF midwestern THE MIDWEST JUST BEYOND

PROF. ATRIX, I THINK IT'S TIME WE HEAD OUT IN SEARCH OF THE LOST TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC.

NEIN! I INSIST VE MOVE DOWN DER AMAZON UNTIL VE REACH CIVILIZATION!

HERR RAATCH - PERTVILABY WILL NOT LISTEN TO REASON, VE VILL HEAD FOR CIVILIZATION, MACH SCHNELL!

YEAH, BUT I...

DON'T DO IT PROF. SMYTE!

YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT! THE AMAZON IS TORTUOUS & FRAUGHT WITH PERIL- I IMPLORE YOU... IN THE NAME OF GOOD SENSE...

HERR PERTVILLABY... YOU ARE A FOOL!

THEY LEAVE US NO CHOICE, PROF. ATRIX. WE'LL CONTINUE OUR QUEST WITHOUT THEM...

D.J. Ross

TO BE CONTINUED!

EPISODE 90: AS WE RECALL, A DOWNDRAFT HAS FORCED OUR HEROES TO HAVE STRUCK OFF ON THEIR OWN INTO THE DENSE AMAZONIAN RAINFOREST...

I SURE HOPE SCHUYLER & PROF. SMYTE FIND THEIR WAY TO CIVILIZATION.

WE'D BEST GET MOVING... THE MOUNTAINS ARE A LONG WAY OFF.

RIGHT! FEATHER, HELP ME SALVAGE SOME OF THIS STREWN-ABOUT EXPEDITIONARY EQUIPMENT FROM THE AIRPLANE WRECKAGE.

D.J. Ross

DO YOU HEAR ANYTHING, LANCEY? I'M SURE I HEARD SOMETHING MOVING AROUND OUT THERE?

FIERCE ABORIGINES IN THE PROVERBIAL UNDERBRUSH, PERHAPS?

NONSENSE, MY BOY! THE HOSTILE NATIVES YOU'VE SEEN IN THOSE GRADE 'B' MOVIES ARE MERELY LUDICROUS HOLLYWOOD STEREOTYPES!

HUMPHREY STUBBS in Stereotypes

EPISODE 91: LAST TIME AS YOU RECALL, LANCE & COMPANY WERE ABOUT TO DEPART THE CRASH SCENE WHEN AN UNSEEN PRESENCE MADE ITSELF (PAINFULLY) KNOWN!

MY WORD! WHAT A VORACIOUS SPECIES OF AMAZONIAN MOSQUITO!

QUICK! SALVAGE WHAT YOU CAN AND RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!!

OH RELAX! I'VE GOT SOME "6-12" RIGHT HERE IN MY KIT...

!! I'LL GET IT FOR YOU MY BOY... NO NEED TO GRAB!

CHUNK!

LET'S GO PROF. ATRIX, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

POPPYCOCK—WE HAVE PLENTY OF DAYLIGHT LEFT!

LANCEY DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD TELL THEM WE'RE NOT FROM THE STATE DEPT?

TOMORROW: PURSUIT!

EPISODE 92: IN THE THICK OF THE UPPER AMAZONIAN JUNGLE LANCE, FEATHER & PROF. SMYTE ARE FLEEING FOR THEIR VERY LIVES!!

RUN PROF. ATRIX! THOSE AREN'T MOSQUITOES! THEY'RE DEADLY CURARE-TIPPED DARTS!!

LANCE! WHAT LUDICROUS TASTE IN LANDSCAPING!

FEATHER, I THINK WE'VE CROSSED INTO SOME SORT OF SACRED TERRITORY!

STOP! TRIBAL SHAMAN SAY THIS PLACE TABOO!

MAN, I CANNOT RELATE TO YOU PRIMITIVES AND THAT WITCH DOCTOR JIVE! TO THINK MY DADDY THE CHIEF MADE ME SPLIT THE SCENE AT UCLA TO RETURN TO THIS KINDA GIG! LET'S TAKE OFF AFTER THOSE OTHER TWO DUDES WE SAW HEADIN' FOR THE RIVER.

D.J. Ross

UCLA

SMYTE & RAATCH CONTINUED!

EPISODE 93: LANCE FEATHER & PROF. ATRIX HAVE REACHED SAFE GROUND; HOWEVER OUR BELLIGERENT UNITAL NATIVES HAVE RAISED THEIR ATHANUS 'n SMYTHE PARTIES

You see, HEAR Roatch, JUNGLE TRAVEL IS EASIER DEN EVER I IMAGINED; VE EVEN HAFF A CHOICE OF VATER KRAFT.

YES, LET'S TAME THAT SMAZZY LITTLE NUMBER OVER THERE. MUNST HAS A YACHT JUST THAT COLOR BACK IN...

HEAVENS To GOEBBELS! VE ARE BEING PURSUED BY SAVAGES?! GET IN-QVIK!??

PADDLE, You FOOL! PADDLE IFF You VALUE Your WORTHLESS LIFE!!

WHEN Do THEY FEED THE FISH IN THIS PLACE?! THEY SEEM SIMPLY RAVENOUS!

(B-B CONTINUES)

EPISODE 94: FIERCE HEAD-HUNTERS ARE PURSUING HEROES SMYTHE AND ROATCH ALONG THE AMAZON HEADWATERS.

ROATCH, You KLOD! PADDLE ON! VE ARE SURROUNDED BY FLESH SEEKING PIRANHAS AND CHASED BY BLOOD THIRSTY CANNIBALS!

YES, AND To THINK I COULD HAVE BEEN WASTING ALL THIS TIME BACK IN THE SANCTITY OF COLLEGE DORM Room!

LOOK AT THESE SPACED OUT DUDES — MAN, THEY'RE HEADIN' RIGHT FOR THEM RAPIDS! OUTTASIGHT!?

UGLH

CONTINUED???

EPISODE 95: THE OFFSPRINTS OF THE AMAZONIAN HEADHUNTERS HAVE PROVEN THE UNDOING OF OUR BELEAGUERED CHARACTERS, V.D. SMYTHE & GENTLEMAN ROATCH

BLUD

AHH!!

OOOH (CLUB) THANK You PROFESSOR

...SMYTH

MEANWHILE, AT THE PERIMETER OF THE RAINFOREST:

PROF. ATRIX... LOOK HERE

THE LANDMARKS ARE BEGINNING To MAKE SENSE. WE'VE ENTERED THE AREA SHOWN BY THE GOLDEN PLAQUE!

MY WORD. WHAT HAVE WE HERE?

QUICKSAND? TUNE IN MONDAY! CONT'D

EPISODE 96: AS WE LEFT OUR HEROES, PROF. ATRIX HAS LED THEM ACROSS AN AMAZONIAN QUICKSAND BOG!

FASCINATING! I NEVER REALIZED THAT THIS TYPE OF MUSHROOM GREW To SHOULDER LEVEL IN THIS REGION.

PROFESSOR! QUICKSAND!!

QUICKSAND? WELL, STOP JOSTLING ME SO, LANCELOT, OR I MAY FALL INTO IT? FRIGHTFUL SUBSTANCE, QUICKSAND...

IT'S A GOOD THING You NOVICES HAVE AN OLD PRO LIKE MYSELF ALONG To PROTECT You IN THESE TREACHEROUS ENVIRONS; AFTER ALL MY LAST EXPEDITION THRU HERE WAS ONLY 74 YEARS AGO.

WELL, ACCORDING To THE MAP ON THE PLAQUE, WE'LL HAVE To SCALE THESE MOUNTAINS To REACH THE LOST TEMPLE.

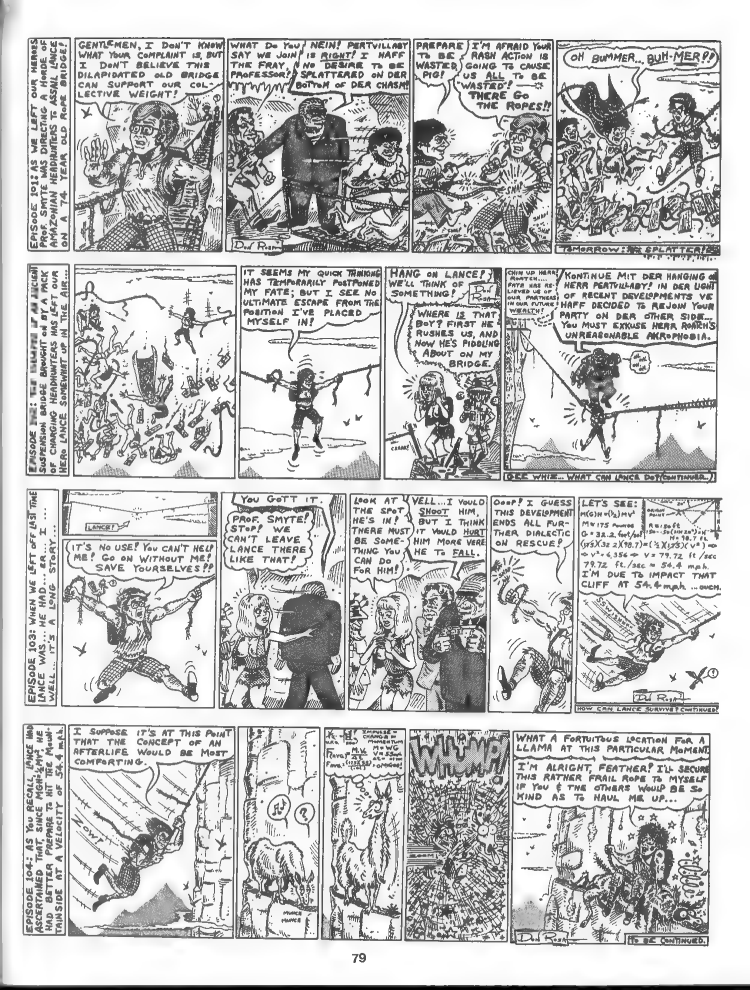
TOMORROW: SMYTE & ROATCH IN PERIL

EPISODE 97: AS WE REJOIN PROF SPU'TE AND HIS INTREPID COMPANIONS, WE FIND THEM ON THE HORNS OF A DILEMMA...
WHAT ARE YOU PEOPLE GOING TO DO?! WHY HAVE YOU TIED US UP?!?!
MAN, THIS IS THE ONLY PART OF THIS TRIBAL JIVE I CAN, LIKE RELATE TO!
Y'SEE, WE GONNA' TAKE THESE CURARE POISON DARTS AND DIP THEM IN A LITTLE CURARE POISON, Y'KNOW'? THEN WE'RE GONNA' STICK THESE BABIES IN YOUR LEGS SO THE JUNK TAKES A WHILE TO DO ITS THING. AND JUST BEFORE YOU KICK OFF, YOU GONNA' REALLY EXPERIENCE SOME OUTTA-SIGHT ANQUISH WHICH CAUSE YOU TO DO ONE WILD KINDA' BOOGIE...
...AND THAT'S WHY WE HAVE YOU TIED UP!
H-H-HOW I WISH WE HAD FOLLOWED PERTWILLABY & THE OTHERS TO THAT TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC!
MANCO WHO?
LAY THAT ON ME AGAIN, MAN!?
OHO! THE HEAD HEADHUNTER KNOWS SUMTHIN!

EPISODE 98: THWARTED WITH TAMEHE BLOWGUN DART, OUR HERO MUST DRAW ON THE POWER OF MANCO CAPAC WHICH HAS STRUCK A RESPONSIVE CHORD WITHIN HIS TAMEHEARTS...
TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC?! YOU'D BEST GIVE WITH SOME FAST TAWKIN' ON THAT SUBJECT OR YOU'LL WIND UP EATIN' THIS POISON DART!
W-W-WELL, WE WERE ON SOME KIND OF EXPEDITION TO FIND THIS TEMPLE... MM-HMM. MANCO CAPAC WAS ITS NAME... ONE OF THE OTHER GUYS HAD THIS MAP TO IT, AND...
HEY, WHEN I WAS GROOVIN' ON SOUTH AMERICAN HISTORY BACK AT UCLA, I STUDIED ABOUT THAT PLACE... IT'S S'POSED TO BE WHERE THE INCAN GANG KEPT THEIR STASH, AIN'T IT?!?!
STASH? UHD WHAT ISS DIS "STASH"?
STASH? BREAD? HMMMMM! JINGLE CAKE? CIFF VE KAN MONEY, JACK? LEAD YOU TO DIS PLACE, DO YOU THINK VE KOULD, PERHAPS, STRIKE A DEAL?
LEAVE IT TO PROF SPUTE! (CONTINUED?)

EPISODE 99: SPU'TE & PARTY ARE OFFERED AN INTERESTING BARGAIN IN EXCHANGE FOR THE LOST TREASURE-LADEN TEMPLE FOR THEIR FREEDOM AND A PIECE OF THE ACTION!
...UND AFTER YOU RELEASE US, UND VE KATCH UP MIT DER OTHER FACTION OF OUR PARTY, VE WILL SHOW YOU DER SECRET DIS PERTVILLABY HOLDS TO THE TEMPLE'S LOCATION.
GOTMER SELF A DEAL, JACK?
BUT... GREAT GOD TIKKI-PAPO SAY NO GO JUJU-LAND!
AHH... BUT BEYOND JUJU-LAND DE BIG MONEY!
SO, WHAT GREAT GOD TIKKI-PAPO KNOW, ANYHOW?
FALL IN FOR MARCH THRU JUJU-LAND!!
LATER THAT SAME DAY, HIGH IN THE PERUVIAN ANDES...
OHO! LOOKS LIKE WE GET A BRIEF RESPITE FROM MOUNTAIN CLIMBING...
WHAT HAVE WE HERE? (SHOWDOWN GALA TOOTS EPISODE)

EPISODE 100! GALA TOOTS EPISODE!!! WITH OUR HERO'S FATE HANGING IN THE BALANCE, CHEERING MULTITUDES, CONFETTI, TICKER TAPE, CAR HORNS, PARTY HATS, WHOOPEE CUSHIONS, BALLOONS & OBNOXIOUS BRASS... THEY HAVE IT ALL!
WHY IT'S A PRIMITIVE ROPE BRIDGE! M'BOY... YOU'LL RECALL THAT I WAS ON THE ORIGINAL EXPEDITION TO THIS AREA IN 1899...
I BELIEVE I CAN HELP YOU THERE, BUT WHO COULD HAVE BUILT IT HERE?
...WELL, I'M PROUD TO SAY THAT THIS VERY BRIDGE IS A PRODUCT OF MY HANDIWORK! DOES MY HEART GOOD TO KNOW THAT IT'S STILL FUNCTIONAL AFTER ALL THESE YEARS!
YES, BUT IT DOESN'T LOOK AS THOUGH IT COULD HOLD MUCH MORE WEIGHT... HAD THERE BEEN MORE THAN THE 3 OF US IT MIGHT HAVE... WHAT'S THAT?
DER REDHEAD! HE ISS DER VUN MIT DER MAP! GETT HIM!!
TO BE CONTINUED!!!?


EPISODE 101: AS WE LEFT OUR HEROES PROF. SMYTHE HAD JUST DIRECTED THE ASSAULT ON A 74 YEAR OLD ROPE BRIDGE!
GENTLEMEN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR COMPLAINT IS, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE THIS DILAPIDATED OLD BRIDGE CAN SUPPORT OUR COLLECTIVE WEIGHT!
WHAT DO YOU SAY WE JOIN IN THE FRAY, HAFF? NO DESIRE TO BE PROFESSOR?
NEIN! PERTVILLABY IS RIGHT! I HAFF SPLATTERED ON DER BOTTOM OF DER CHASM!
PREPARE TO BE A RASH ACTION IS GOING TO CAUSE US ALL TO BE WASTED!
I'M AFRAID YOUR WASTED, PIG!
THERE GO THE ROPES!!
OH BUMMER... BUH-MER!?
TOMORROW: SPLATTER!
EPISODE 102: THE UNLIKELY AFFAIR OF HERR LANCE AND HERR PERTVILLABY'S PACK OF CHARGING RHINOCEROSES HAS JUST BEEN INTERRUPTED BY HERR LANCE SOMEWHAT UP IN THE AIR...
IT SEEMS MY QUICK THINKING HAS TEMPORARILY POSTPONED MY FATE; BUT I SEE NO ULTIMATE ESCAPE FROM THE POSITION I'VE PLACED MYSELF IN!
HANG ON LANCE! WE'LL THINK OF SOMETHING!
WHERE IS THAT BOY? FIRST HE RUSHES US, AND NOW HE'S PIDDLING ABOUT ON MY BRIDGE.
CHIN UP HERR PERTVILLABY... PAYS US RE-LIEVED OF OUR PURCHASES OF FUTURE WEALTH!
KONTINUE MIT DER HANGING OF HERR PERTVILLABY? IN DER UGHT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS VE HAFF DECIDED TO REJOIN YOUR PARTY ON DER OTHER SIDE... YOU MUST EXKUSE HERR ROMEN'S UNREASONABLE AKROPHOBIA.
OKE WHIE... WHAT CAN LANCE DO? CONTINUED...
EPISODE 103: WHEN WE LEFT OFF LAST TIME WE WERE ALL IN A BIT OF A PICKLE... WELL, IT'S A LONG STORY...
LANCE!
IT'S NO USE! YOU CAN'T HELP ME! GO ON WITHOUT ME! SAVE YOURSELVES!?
YOU GOTT IT.
PROF. SMYTE! STOP? WE CAN'T LEAVE LANCE THERE LIKE THAT?
LOOK AT THE SPOT HE'S IN! THERE MUST BE SOMETHING YOU CAN DO FOR HIM!
VELL... I VOULD SHOOT HIM, BUT I THINK IT VOULD HURT HIM MORE VERE HE TO FALL.
OOOP? I GUESS THIS DEVELOPMENT ENDS ALL FURTHER DIALECTIC ON RESCUE?
LET'S SEE:
$M(\sin\theta - \mu\cos\theta)g = Mv^2$
$M = 175 \text{ pounds}$
$G = 32.2 \text{ ft/sec}^2$
$(\sin 30 - .2\cos 30)(175)(32.2) = (175)v^2$
$\Rightarrow v^2 = 4.356 \Rightarrow v = 79.72 \text{ ft/sec}$
$79.72 \text{ ft/sec} \approx 54.4 \text{ mph}$
I'M DUE TO IMPACT THAT CLIFF AT 54.4 mph ... OUCH.
HOW CAN LANCE SURVIVE? CONTINUED...
EPISODE 104: AS YOU RECALL, LANCE HAD ASCERTAINED THAT SHOULD HE BE HURLED FROM THE MOUNTAINSIDE AT A VELOCITY OF 54.4 mph, HE HAD BETTER PREPARE TO HIT THE GROUND...
I SUPPOSE IT'S AT THIS POINT THAT THE CONCEPT OF AN AFTERLIFE WOULD BE MOST COMFORTING.
ZOWIE!
?!
WHAT A FORTUITOUS LOCATION FOR A LLAMA AT THIS PARTICULAR MOMENT.
I'M ALRIGHT, FEATHER! I'LL SECURE THIS RATHER FRAIL ROPE TO MYSELF IF YOU & THE OTHERS WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO HAUL ME UP...
TO BE CONTINUED.

EPISODE 105: HAVING BEEN RESCUED FROM AN UNTIMELY DEMISE BY A STRATOSPHERICALLY PUCKED LLAMA, LANCE IS NOW SPACKED OUT INSIDE HIS SLEEPING BAG.

PULL GENTLY BUT FIRMLY FRIENDS! I'M BEING BUFFETED BY THE WIND, AND I FEAR NEITHER I NOR THE RAMS CAN TAKE MUCH MORE OF IT.

WE'RE PULLING AS HARD AS WE CAN LANCEY!

YA. (YAWN)

MUCH LATER...

WHEW- MADE IT!... PROF SMITH FORGIVE MY CURIOSITY. BUT WHAT WAS YOUR CONNECTION WITH THOSE RAMPAGING SAVAGES?

VE VERE PRISONERS, HERR PERTVILLABY! DEY VERE MARCHING US OFF TO DER SHOWERS WHEN DEY DECIDED TO ADD YOU TO THEIR KOLLEKTION. BEYOND DAT, I KNOW NOTHING.

OH... WELL, I SUGGEST WE PRESS ON TO THE LOST TEMPLE WITH ALL POSSIBLE DISPATCH.

NEXT WEEK IN THE TEMPLE OF

EPISODE 106: DAY BY HARROWING DAY, OUR GROUP INCHES EVER UPWARD, EVER NEARER TO THE LOST TEMPLE OF THE SUN!

THIS IS IT EVERYONE — ACCORDING TO THE MAP ON THE PLAQUE, PERCHED ATOP THIS SELFSAME MOUNTAIN IS THE TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC!

YA... UND ALL VE HAFF TO DO ISS KLIMB IT..

BE CAREFUL WITH THAT DYNAMITE! YOU'RE CARRYING PROF. ATRIX... THERE'S STILL A CHANCE WE MIGHT HAVE TO DO SOME LIGHT BLASTING IF THE ENTRANCES TO THE TEMPLE ARE SEALED.

BUT OF COURSE, LANCELOT.

VELL, HERR ROATCH, VE KANN NOT ONLY DISKREDIT PERVILLABY AS VAS OUR ORIGINAL INTENTION, BUT VE KAN, PERHAPS, KOMMANDEER DIS ALLEGED TREASURE AS VELL..

LOOK LANCE! A SACRED HUACA MARKING THE WAY TO THE TEMPLE — WE MUST BE VERY CLOSE!

YES, FEATHER. THE SUMMIT'S JUST AHEAD!

TOMORROW IN THE TEMPLE OF

EPISODE 107: THIS IS IT, OUR MUCH BELEAGUERED EXPEDITION IS AT LAST NEARING THE SUMMIT OF THE MAGNIFICENT MOUNTAIN!

COME ON, LET'S GO! I CAN'T WAIT 'TILL THE TEMPLE COMES INTO VIEW!

ONE MORE TURN OF THIS WINDING TRAIL AND WE SHOULD BE THERE!?

DIS ISS IT, MINE HAMRAD!

THERE IT IS! THERE IT IS...

THE TEMPLE of MANCO CAPAC the SON of the SUN!!!

EPISODE 108: AT LAST! FINALLY!! THE LOST TEMPLE IS NO LONGER LOST!

STUPENDOUS! COLOSSAL!

A VERITABLE WORK OF ART!

ARE WE THERE YET?

THIS IS MAGNIFICENCE BEYOND MY WILDEST DREAMS!!!

EVEN I AM IMPRESSED!

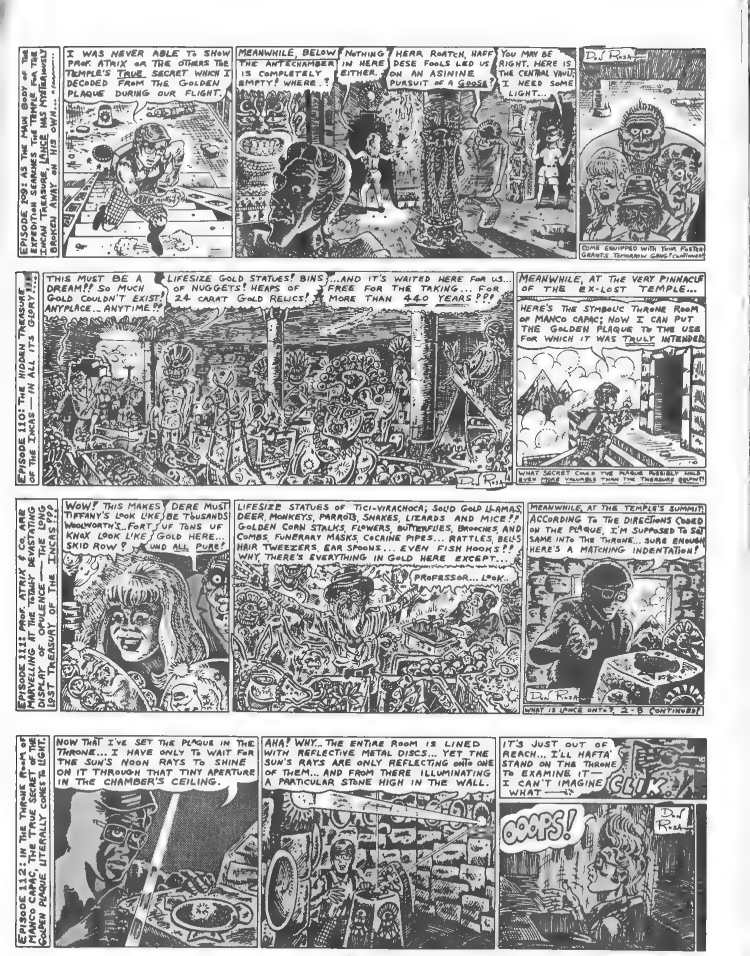
THOSE MEGALITHIC WALLS! THIS MAJESTIC COURTYARD! AND EVEN A SACRIFICIAL SONOTE!

IMPOSSIBLE! THE INCAS DIDN'T PERFORM SACRIFICES & WOULDN'T HAVE HAD USE FOR A SACRIFICIAL PIT!

VELL, DER TREASURE MUST BE IN DER TEMPLE! LET'S GETT INSIDE, MACH SCHNELL!

RIGHT! I'D REJOIN YOU AS SOON AS I CHECK OUT A CERTAIN THEORY.

WHERE IS LANCE GOING?! CONTINUED?!


EPISODE 109: AS THE MAIN BODY OF THE EXPEDITION SEARCHES THE TEMPLE PROPER FOR THE TREASURE, LEWIS AND HIS HENCHMEN BREAK INTO THE CHAMBER BELOW...
I WAS NEVER ABLE TO SHOW PROF. ATRIX OR THE OTHERS THE TEMPLE'S TRUE SECRET WHICH I DECODED FROM THE GOLDEN PLAQUE DURING OUR FLIGHT.
MEANWHILE, BELOW THE ANTECHAMBER IS COMPLETELY EMPTY! WHERE?
NOTHING IN HERE EITHER.
HERR ROATCH, HAFF DESE FOOLS LED US ON AN ASININE PURSUIT OF A GOOSE?
You may be right. HERE IS THE CENTRAL VAULT. I NEED SOME LIGHT...
Dave Roach
COME EQUIPPED WITH TOUR PATRON GRANTS TOMORROW GANG!!!
EPISODE 110: THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF THE INCAS — IN ALL ITS GLORY!!!!
THIS MUST BE A DREAM!? SO MUCH GOLD COULDN'T EXIST ANYPLACE... ANYTIME!?
LIFESIZE GOLD STATUES! BINS OF NUGGETS! HEAPS OF 24 CARAT GOLD RELICS!
...AND IT'S WAITED HERE FOR US... FREE FOR THE TAKING... FOR MORE THAN 440 YEARS!?!?
MEANWHILE, AT THE VERY PINNACLE OF THE EX-LOST TEMPLE...
HERE'S THE SYMBOLIC THRONE ROOM OF MANCO CAPAC. NOW I CAN PUT THE GOLDEN PLAQUE TO THE USE FOR WHICH IT WAS TRULY INTENDED.
WHAT SECRET COULD THE PLAQUE POSSIBLY HOLD EVEN MORE VALUABLE THAN THE TREASURE BENEATH!
EPISODE 111: PROF. ATRIX & CO. ARE MARVELLING AT THE TOTALLY DEVASTATING QUANTITY OF THE LOST TREASURY OF THE INCAS!!!
WOW! THIS MAKES DERE MUST TIFFANY'S LOOK LIKE BE THOUSANDS WOOLWORTH'S...FORT OF TONS OF KNOX LOOK LIKE GOLD HERE... SKID ROW! AND ALL PURE!
LIFESIZED STATUES OF TICI-VIRACHOCA; SOLID GOLD LLAMAS DEER, MONKEYS, PARROTS, SNAKES, LIZARDS AND MICE!? GOLDEN CORN STALKS, FLOWERS, BUTTERFLIES, BROOCHES AND COMBS. FUNERARY MASKS. COCAINE PIPES... RATTLES, BELLS HAIR TWEEZERS. EAR SPOONS... EVEN FISH HOOKS!? WHY THERE'S EVERYTHING IN GOLD HERE EXCEPT...
PROFESSOR... LOOK.
MEANWHILE, AT THE TEMPLE'S SUMMIT!
ACCORDING TO THE DIRECTIONS CODED ON THE PLAQUE, I'M SUPPOSED TO SET SAME INTO THE THRONE... SURE ENOUGH HERE'S A MATCHING INDENTATION!
WHAT IS SPACE ENTER 2-8 CONTINUED!
EPISODE 112: IN THE THRONE ROOM OF MANCO CAPAC, THE TRUE SECRET OF THE GOLDEN PLAQUE LITERALLY COMES TO LIGHT!
NOW THAT I'VE SET THE PLAQUE IN THE THRONE... I HAVE ONLY TO WAIT FOR THE SUN'S NOON RAYS TO SHINE ON IT THROUGH THAT TINY APERTURE IN THE CHAMBER'S CEILING.
AHA! WHY... THE ENTIRE ROOM IS LINED WITH REFLECTIVE METAL DISCS... YET THE SUN'S RAYS ARE ONLY REFLECTING onto ONE OF THEM... AND FROM THERE ILLUMINATING A PARTICULAR STONE HIGH IN THE WALL.
IT'S JUST OUT OF REACH... I'LL HAFTA STAND ON THE THRONE TO EXAMINE IT— I CAN'T IMAGINE WHAT
CLICK
OOOPS!
Dave Roach

EPISODE 113: WHEN WE LAST SAW INNIE, HE HAD MESSED A HIDDEN RELEASE LEVER IN THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN, WHICH HE STOMPED STRAIGHT DOWN!:

MY WORD! THE THRONE HAS LOWERED ITSELF INTO A SECRET CHAMBER DEEP IN THE INTESTICES OF THE TEMPLE.

APPARANTLY I'M IN THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF MANCO CAPAC— THE HOLY OF HOLIES... THE SECRET ALTAR ROOM.

THE LIGHT— NOW IT'S REFLECTING UP ON..... GOOD LORD!

LANCE— WE'VE BEEN LOOKING EVERYWHERE FOR YOU — COME SEE ALL THE GOLD THAT...

BEHOLD — THE TRUE SECRET OF THE TEMPLE OF THE SON OF THE SUN!

— TO BE CONTINUED...

EPISODE 114: JUST TIME AS YOU PRECIALL LANCE HAD DISCOVERED WHAT HE TERMED THE TRUE SECRET OF THE TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC.

WHAT IS GOING ON DOWN HERE? WHAT...?

THE SACRED SUNBURST! THE "EYE OF MANCO CAPAC"! THIS IS THE TEMPLE'S ORIGINAL TREASURE!

THE GOLDEN PLAQUE THAT HELD THE SECRET ROUTE TO THIS TEMPLE AND WAS THE "KEY" TO THIS ALTAR ROOM WAS BAKED INTO THAT POT IN WHICH I FOUND IT YEARS BEFORE THE INCAS TRANSPORTED THEIR GOD TO THE VAULTS BELOW TO SAFEGUARD IT FROM PIZARRO! THE INCAS' MOST VALUABLE AND MOST SACRED POSSESSION WAS THIS SUNBURST!

I BECAME SUSPICIOUS WHEN I NOTED A REFERENCE TO TREASURE ON THE PLAQUE, KNOWING THAT WHOEVER MADE THE PLAQUE COULD HAVE KNOWN NOTHING OF THE GOLD WHICH WOULD LATER BE BROUGHT HERE!

YES, AND I READ OF THE GOLD IN ANCIENT LEGENDS... LET'S EXAMINE THE COMPONENTS OF THIS SUNBURST,

AND WE WILL... TOMORROW!

EPISODE 115: MEMO: GERRY ATTLY AS ABOVE: WE MUST ACQUIRE THE FABULOUS JEWEL-ENCRUSTED SUNBURST OF THE ANCIENT INCAS...

THIS IS INCREDIBLE! THE SUNBURST ITSELF IS SOLID PLATINUM WITH JADITE INLAYS! THERE ARE TWO RINGS OF POLYNESIAN BLACK PEARLS ALONG THE RIM... THE SUN RAYS ARE MADE OF ENORMOUS ECUADORIAN EMERALDS; BETWEEN THE RAYS ARE ALTERNATING PATTERNS OF RUBIES SET IN FIELDS OF BROWN OPALS AND MOONSTONES.....

AND LAVENDER STAR-SAPPHIRES SET IN FIELDS OF GOLDEN BERYL AND ALEXANDRITE! AND IN THE CENTER ...IN THE CENTER ARE NO LESS THAN 8 GRAPE FRUIT-SIZED BLUE DIAMONDS AND ONE AS LARGE AS A VOLLEYBALL!

EACH OF THESE JEWELS MIGHT BE WORTH THE NATIONAL DEBT; BUT COMBINED ON THIS SUNBURST, WITH ITS CONSIDERABLE HISTORIC VALUE, THE JEWELS MAKE THIS THE SINGLE MOST PRECIOUS OBJECT ON THIS EARTH!!?

EVIL PINGS, INSIDIOUS INTENTIONS, AND GENERALLY TACKY THOUGHTS.

TO BE CONTINUED...

EPISODE 116: OUR DRAMATIS PERSONAE ARE ASSEMBLED AROUND THE LOST TEMPLE & ITS PRICELESS CONTENTS:

HERR ROATCH... AN INGENIOUS PLOT ISS HATCHING IN MINE HEAD! A PLOT VHICH VILL BE QUITE ADEQUATE RETRIBUTION FUR MINE LAST 30 YEARS UF RELATIFF QUIESCENCE.

FITTINGLY (MALEVOLENT) TRUST?

HERR ROATCH... IFF ALL UF DAT INKAN GOLD VERE TO ZUDDENLY APPEAR IN AMERIKA, VHAT DO YOU THINK VOULD HAPPEN — VHAT VOULD BE DER REZULT?

A LOTTA HAPPY AMERICANS?

NEIN! HERR ROATCH, DAT MUCH GOLD RELEASED ON DER ALREADY KRITIKALLY UNSTABLE AMERIKAN EKONOMY VOULD UTTERLY DESTROY DER KOUNTRY! AMERIKA VOULD BE PLUNGED INTO ABSOLUTE UND TOTAL KHAOS!

UND DEN, DEN HERR ROATCH, HIT DER EUROPEAN SALE UF DER JEWELS FROM DAT SUNBURST I KAN FINANCE MINE FONDEST DREAM — MORE VITAL DAN DIS TRIVIAL PERTVILLABY BUSINESS — DER ESTABLISHMENT OF A 4th REICH... IN AMERIKA?!?

HOKEY SMOKES! (CRUNT)

EPISODE 117: AS WE LEFT OFF LAST TIME, PROF. SMYTE HAD HERMED A FLORISH PUT'S TO HELP FINANCE HIS DIABOLICAL PROJECT: THE 4th REICH . . . NO KIDDIN'!!?

YAAAAA... DIS SCHEME IS VORTHY UF EFEN MY DEPRAVITY!

HEH HEH... YES, PROFESSOR...WHEN YOU RELEASE ALL OF THAT GOLD ON THE AMERICAN ECONOMY, THE COUNTRY WILL COLLAPSE!

HMM...PERTVILLABY UND DER VORKERS ARE ON DER NEXT LEFEL EXAMINING SAME UF DIS INSIPID ARCHITEKTURE.

... AND THE INDUSTRIES OF AMERICA WILL TOPPLE INTO RUIN OVERNIGHT! WHY, EVEN THE VAST CORPORATE INDUSTRIES OF THE ROOTIN TOOTIN FAMILY WILL CRUMBLE INTO... INTO...

HERR PERTVILLABY, IN ALL HIS SICKENING DEGENCY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY VISH TO DETER ME FRUM MINE PURPOSE. HE MUST BE ELIMINATED. HMM... DIS PRIMITIFF PIECE UF SKULPTURE VILL PRESS MINE POINT HOME.

CRUMBLE INTO RUBBLE

NO! IN THE NAME OF THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF CAPITALISM AND FREE ENTERPRAISE STOP!?

TOO LATE!!? TO BE CONTINUED.

EPISODE 118: A SWIFTLY DESCENDING MONOLITH IS ABOUT TO ELIMINATE ONCE PROMISING MEMBER OF FAMILY!?!?!

LANCEY!? LOOK OUT!?

CRASH!

PROF. SMYTE!? PLEASE BE CAREFUL. WHY, YOU COULD PUT OUT SOME-ONE'S EYE!?

PERTVILLABY!? LANCE!? You MUST STOP PROF. SMYTE!? HE'S COOKED UP SOME DEMENTED PLOT TO UNLEASH THE INCAN GOLD TREASURY ON AMERICA AND TOPPLE THE GOVERNMENT!?

YA, HERR PERTVILLABY...DER I SHALL SELL DER PRICELESS JEWELS FRUM DAT SUNBURST IN DER BLACK MARKETS UF EUROPE...TO FINANCE MINE 4th REICH IN YOUR DEPADENT AMERIKA!

PROF. SMYTE... I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S COME OVER YOU... BUT I AM AND WILL ALWAYS BE FIRST & FOREMOST TO DEFEND TRUTH, JUSTICE AND THE AMERICAN WAY! SIR—I ACCEPT YOUR CHALLENGE.

NEXT WEEK: ARMAGEDDON!!!!?

EPISODE 119: ARMAGEDDON? ALL PREMISES ARE ARMADONNEE? IT'S SMYTE VS. LANCE!?!?!?

SUBMIT, PERTVILLABY? You KANNOT KONQUER ME? BESIDES, WHEN I ESTABLISH MINE 4th REICH IN AMERIKA, 85% OF DER POPULATION VILL NEFER NOTICE DER DIFFERENCE!

NEVER! I SHALL RISE TO WHATEVER OCCASION TO FOIL YOUR NEFARIOUS SCHEME!

MY STRENGTH IS AS THE STRENGTH OF TEN BECAUSE MY HEART IS PURE!?!?!?

You HAFF GOT To BE KIDDING!

WOOOHF!

THUD!

I AM A SUPER-MAN, PERTVILLABY! I AM A MASTER OF MEN! You ARE DOOMED TO SUBJUGATION!

AMERICA VILL TRIUMPH!? NOW AND FOREVER(COMICS!?)

TEXT: ARROW/SCRIBBLER ART: JOHN SEE FRENCH WORDS SMIT

EPISODE 120: THIS LOOKS LIKE THE END FOR LANCE (IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT WITH A MONSTER. ARE YOU SURE!?!?!?

I'LL SHOW DER VORLD DER MEANING UF NORDIC SUPREMACY MIT DER HELP UF DAT BEJEWELED SUNBURST, PERTVILLABY! BUT You VILL NOT BE AROUND TO SEE IT!?!

AAAH...HERR ROATCH...You HAFF KOME To YOUR SENSES NO DOUBT. I ALLOW You To PULISH OFF PERTVILLABY MIT DAT VEAPON I SEE You HAFF PROKURED FRUM DER GOLD VAULTS.

CORRECTION, HERR PROFESSOR? MY SYMPATHIES (AND FAMILY FORTUNE) LIE WITH AMERICAN INDUSTRY AND You SHALL NOT DESTROY IT!

WHAM! WHAM!

BUNDERSTAG!?

HIMMEL! You HAFF DUN IT NOW! You HAFF FINALLY ARISEN MINE IRE! I HAFF HAD IT MIT ALL You PEOPLE! IT'S No MORE MISTER NICE GUY!

ARROW/SCRIBBLER EXCESSIVE PROPS YOU!!!!

EPISODE 121: AN ENRAGED PROF. VICTOR SMYTE DISCOVERS THAT HIS AND OUR OTHER EXPEDITION MEMBERS IN MASSEF

PERTVILLABY... I AM THRU WIT DER POOPIN' AROUND HERE! I AM NOW GOING TO PERFORM AN ON-DER-SPOT VIVISEKTION ON YOU! ——OUT UP MINE TRAJEKTBAY YOU FEEBLE SNIVELING OLD PIECE OF ——!

VAS ISS LOS?? DYNAMITE? DER EXKAVATION DYNAMITE!?

YAAA... I DUN'T HAFF TIME TO TOY WIT YOU PEOPLE! I MUST SEE TO TRANSPORTING DAT GOLD TO DER UNSUSPEKTING AMERIKAN EKONOMI.

THESE EXPENSIFFS WILL DISPATCH YOU PANTY-WAISTS... SCHNELL ??!... HOWEFER, IT MAY LEAF AN UNSIGHTLY STAIN.

TOMORROW: THE FINAL EPISODE?

EPISODE 122: LAST TIME AS YOU RECALL, PROF. SMYTE HAD PRESENTED LANCE WITH A DYNAMITE CHARGE WHICH HE HAD AS A MEAN GARGOUS ENOUGH TO IGNITE...

GOOD GOD, PERTVILLABY! GET RID OF THAT THING OR WE'LL BE BLOWN TO BITS AND PIECES ALTOGETHER!

THE SONOTE?! IT'S OUR ONLY CHANCE?? DOWN??

I TOLD YOU LANCELOT! THAT CANNOT BE A SONOTE. THE INCAS HAD NO USE FOR SACRIFICIAL PITS.

FOOM

ADIEU, HERR PERTVILLABY. I HEREBY END YOUR LIFE.

WAIT-(CHOKE) WAIT A MOMENT! THE SONOTE? WHAT HAS THE DYNAMITE BEEN DONE TO THE SONOTE??

YOU WERE RIGHT PROF. ATMIX: THIS IS NOT A SONOTE! IT WAS HERE WHEN THE INCAS BUILT THEIR TEMPLE AND THEY WISELY CHOSE NOT TO SEAL IT UP! IT'S THE MOUTH OF A DORMANT VOLCANO!!

EXPANSION OF VAS DER MOUTH UF A DORMANT VOLKANOE

TO BE CONTINUED...

EPISODE 123: ANY OF YOU STICK-TYPES WHO HAVN'T ALREADY PROGNOSTICATED THE ERUPTION OF A DORMANT VOLCANO AT CLOSE RANGE SHOULD BE SHOT

TAKE IT EASY, EVERYONE. THIS IS AN ERUPTION OF IONIZED GASES. IF WE JUST SIT TIGHT IT SHOULD VENT ITS PRESSURE THROUGH THE FUMAROLE. IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT? —WHERE'S PROF. SMYTE?

KA-BOOM

I AM HERE? IFE DIS VERDAMNT PLACE ISS GONNA' BLEW UPP I'M GONNA' ZE ALVAGE SUMTIN.

KLANG

OH BLITZKRIEG! I ZLIPPED!

OOOOOOOH

No.

WHOMP

LANCE! LANCE?

MINE SUNBURST!

TOMORROW: PERTVILLABY TURNS?

EPISODE 124: LANCE & THE "EYE OF MARK CAPAC," THE WORLD'S MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE, HAVE JUST DISAPPEARED DOWN THE FUMAROLE IN A CLOUD OF SMOKE!

LANCE? LANCE?

HE'S GONE! LOST!

WHAT.. WH— WAS I KILLED OUTRIGHT?

ACH! DER SUNBURST! IT IS VEDGED INTO DER FUMAROLE!

WHO.. WHY YES IT IS... CONVEX SIDE DOWN I MIGHT ADD... CREATING QUITE AN EFFECTIVE PRESSURE SEAL! THE IONIZED GASES AND MAGMA ARE BUILDING INCREDIBLE FORCES!

TO BE RUMBLE!

I'D GUESS THAT THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE OF THIS MOUNTAIN IS SOMEWHAT DUBIOUS!

RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

RUMBLE

TOMORROW: A "PERTVILLABY PAPERS" SPECIAL EDITION!!!

EPISODE 125: SPECIAL EDITION?!? LANCE AND CO. HAVE FLED THE TEMPLE OF MANCO CAPAC AND ARE NOW AT THE SUMMIT OF A NEARBY PEAK...

PANT... PANT... I NEVER THOUGHT WE'D GET AWAY IN TIME!

RUMBLE

YES... WITH THE GUNBURST SEALING UP THE FUMAROLS THERE'S NO TELLING HOW MUCH FORCE THAT VOLCANO CAN GENERATE!

LISTEN... IT'S LIKE THE SOUND OF DISTANT THUNDER, ISN'T IT...

...OR LIKE THE ROAR OF A WATERFALL AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

RRUMBLE.

IT'S REACHED CRITICAL PRESSURE! EVERYBODY-HIT THE GROUND!!

KAAAA!

BOOM

TO BE CONTINUED (OH NOOO!)

EPISODE 126: THE MOUNTAINTOP, RATHER THE VOLCANO OF MANCO CAPAC, ITS MOUTH HAVING BEEN SEALED BY THE GUNBURST, EXPLODES WITH THE FORCE OF A 2000 MEGATON NUCLEAR BOMB!

DONNER UND BLITZEN!

WHILE BACK AT STATE U.:

PROF. PHLASH? I'VE JUST DETECTED A DISTURBANCE IN PERU THAT'S REGISTERING 12 ON THE RICHTER SCALE!!

BUT THE RICHTER SCALE ONLY GOES UP TO 10!

TELL THAT TO RICHTER

SEVERAL HOURS LATER

MEIN GOTT! SUCH A NOISE!!!

I FEEL AS IF I JUST RELIVED THE CLIMAX OF AN OLD DOROTHY LAMOUR JUNGLE MOVIE

PERTWILLABY IS THERE ANY CHANCE OF RECOVERING ANY TREASURE?

I SINCERELY DOUBT IT; THAT TITANIC EXPLOSION WAS DIRECTED VERTICALLY WITH SUCH FORCE AS TO GIVE A BALLISTICS EXPERT NIGHTMARES

MEANWHILE... DIRECTLY ABOVE:

HOUSTON? THIS IS SKYEAR GUYS, YOU'RE NOT GONNA BELIEVE THIS, BUT...

D.F. ROSA ...TO BE CONTINUED ONE MORE TIME!

EPISODE 127: THE TREASURE OF THE INCAS IS LOST! BUT OUR HEROES ENDURE...AND LIVE! BUT WHAT OF PERTWILLABY? AND THE VIRULENT PROF. V.D. SMYTHE?

AND NOW PROFESSOR, I MUST PLACE YOU UNDER HOUSE ARREST... UNLESS YOU INSIST ON CONTINUING OUR DUEL, IN WHICH CASE I—

HERR PERTWILLABY I BEG YOUR FORGIVENESS...

...BUT I MAN ONLY ATTRIBUTE MINE SHOCKING MISCONDUCT TO DER THIN AIR AT DIS ELEFATION IN DESE ANDES— AS ISS NOT UNUSUAL FOR A MAN UF MINE SIZE, I MUST HAFF SUFFERED A DE-OXYGENATION UF DER BRAIN CELLS KAUSING HALLUCINATIONS UND DERANGED BEHAFIOR, IFF I DID ANYT'ING OFFENSIFF DURING MINE BRIEF OUT YOU HAFF MINE PROFOUND (GROAN) APOLOGIES.

OH...YES... WELL... THAT SOUNDS LOGICAL.

SO, LET'S BEGIN OUR LONG TREK BACK TO THE "REAL WORLD," COMING PROF. ATRIX?

OF COURSE, LANCELOT... I WAS MERELY EXAMINING A COMMON QUARTZ OUTCROPPING BEHIND THIS BUSH.

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© SCRIPT & DIALOGUE CONSULTANTS: RAY FAWSHEE & RON WEINBERG

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WRITTEN, PRODUCED & DIRECTED BY DON ROSA (AND THE LINES-IN-THE-PAPER)

twilight of the heroes

ART AND STORY BY RON WILBER '77
SPECIAL THANKS TO JIM VAN HISE
ANY RESEMBLANCE TO PERSON OR CHARACTERS LIVING OR DEAD IS PURELY UNINTENDED

HELLO! I'M RONALD WILBER, WORLD FAMOUS ARTISTIC GENIUS. WONDER WITH A TRUE STORY TO TELL. IN 1955 A COVER-UP BEGAN. A MOST FANTASTIC COVER-UP. THE STORY YOU ARE ABOUT TO READ HAS BEEN HUSHED UP FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS. IN EARLY 1977 MANY SECRET DOCUMENTS, FILES, AND CORONER RECORDS CAME INTO MY POSSESSION THROUGH A SOURCE WHO WISHED TO REMAIN UNKNOWN BUT WANTED THIS STORY TO BE TOLD. I TOOK THE FILES TO JIM VAN HISE. WE READ THEM AND TOGETHER WE BECAME DETERMINED TO MAKE THIS STORY PUBLIC. MANY LONG HOURS OF RESEARCH WERE SPENT RECONSTRUCTING WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN THE PRINCIPAL YEARS OF THE COVER-UP, 1955 THRU 1964, A TIME PERIOD IN WHICH MANY POPULAR SUPER-HEROES AND COMICS CODE OFFICIALS WERE BRUTALLY MURDERED. WITH THE USE OF THESE NEVER BEFORE PUBLICIZED RECORDS I WILL RE-CONSTRUCT FOR YOU THE WHOLE HORRIBLE STORY, AND REMEMBER THIS IT REALLY HAPPENED.

part·1
"last respects"

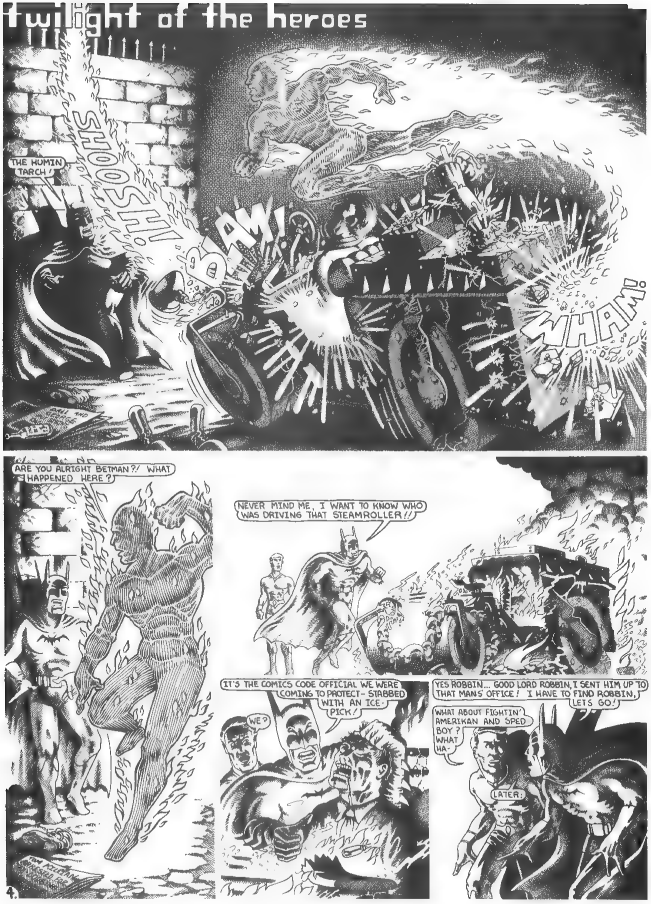
IT STARTED IN JANUARY 1955 WHEN POLICE DISCOVERED THE BODY OF ONE COMICS CODE OFFICIAL IN HIS ROOM. THE MURDER WAS MORE BRUTAL THAN USUAL BUT THE POLICE CONSIDERED IT MERELY ANOTHER MURDER.

LATER THAT MONTH ANOTHER COMICS CODE OFFICIAL WAS FOUND MURDERED, AGAIN HIDEOUSLY. SEVERAL DETECTIVES FEARED A TREND, BUT IT WAS HOPED THE SIMILARITY WAS A COINCIDENCE.

WHEN THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY STARTED OUT WITH ANOTHER GROTESQUE MURDER OF A COMICS CODE OFFICIAL. IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT IT WAS THE SAME KILLER USING THE SAME FRIGHTFUL METHODS.

AS IN ALL CASES, THERE WERE NO REAL CLUES. THE FINGERPRINTS DIDN'T MATCH UP TO ANY KNOWN CRIMINALS, AND THERE WERE NO WITNESSES.
IT'S IN THIS VICINITY THAT THE CRIMES WERE COMMITTED. WE'RE PREPARED TO OFFER POLICE PROTECTION TO ALL COMICS CODE WORKERS. U CAN CALL AND...
INTRIGUED BY THE CRIMES AND THE FACT THAT ALL THE VICTIMS WERE COMICS CODE PERSONNEL, BETMAN AND ROBBIN WENT TO THE POLICE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE TO LEND THEIR HELP.
DEAR GOD! LET'S GET GOING ROBBIN!
BUT BETMAN!
WAIT-A-MINUTE, WHAT IS IT BETMAN?
THE NEWS CARRIED A STORY RECENTLY ABOUT A COMICS CODE OFFICIAL WHO LIVES IN THE MANE HOTEL. LOOK AT THE MAP, IT'S RIGHT IN THE AREA OF THE KILLINGS!
DESPERATELY BETMAN AND ROBBIN RACED THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE CITY IN THE BETMOBILE PRAYING THEY WOULD BE IN TIME.
DUKE'S RESTAURANT
NEWS/MAGAZINES TWICH/CIGARS ART SUPPLIES
TOTA
ROBBIN, WE BETTER GO DIRECTLY TO HIS ROOM.
SCREAMS, COMING FROM THAT ALLEY! BETMAN?
BETTER GO SEE WHAT IT IS.
AARRRGH
AARRRGH
IT COULD BE A RUSE THOUGH, I'LL CHECK THE ALLEY, YOU LOOK AFTER THE COMICS CODE OFFICIAL, ROBBIN.
GOOD LUCK BETMAN!

THAT'S THE ALLEY UP AHEAD. STRANGE THAT A STEAMROLLER SHOULD BE PARKED THERE. I DON'T SEE ANY CONSTRUCTION GOING ON IN THIS AREA.
RETCHEEK REALLY
GOOD THING I BROUGHT MY BAT-LIGHT!
THERE'S SOMEONE
NO TWO PEOPLE AT THE END OF THE ALLEY. GOOD LORD!
IT'S FIGHTIN' AMERIKAN AND SPEEDBOY! BOTH OF THEM WITH AN ICE PICK STUCK IN THEIR (GROAN) HEART!
WITH THE DEATH OF THE TWO SUPER-HEROES THE MURDERS HAD TAKEN ON A DECIDEDLY NEW TREND. UNFORTUNATELY FOR BATMAN HIS PROBLEMS WERE JUST BEGINNING
WHERE IS THAT LIGHT COMING FROM?
IT'S THE STEAMROLLER THAT WAS PARKED OUTSIDE THE ALLEY, COMING TOWARD ME... THE LIGHTS ARE BLINDING
RRR
JMBLE
WHAT CAN I DO?!
RRRRR
3


twilight of the heroes
THE HUMAN TORCH
SHOOSH!
BAM!
WHAM!
ARE YOU ALRIGHT BETMAN?! WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
NEVER MIND ME, I WANT TO KNOW WHO WAS DRIVING THAT STEAMROLLER!!
IT'S THE COMICS CODE OFFICIAL! WE WERE COMING TO PROTECT- STABBED WITH AN ICE PICK!
HE?
YES ROBBIN... GOOD LORD ROBBIN, I SENT HIM UP TO THAT MANS OFFICE! I HAVE TO FIND ROBBIN! LETS GO!
WHAT ABOUT FIGHTIN' AMERIKAN AND SPED BOY? WHAT HA-
LATER!

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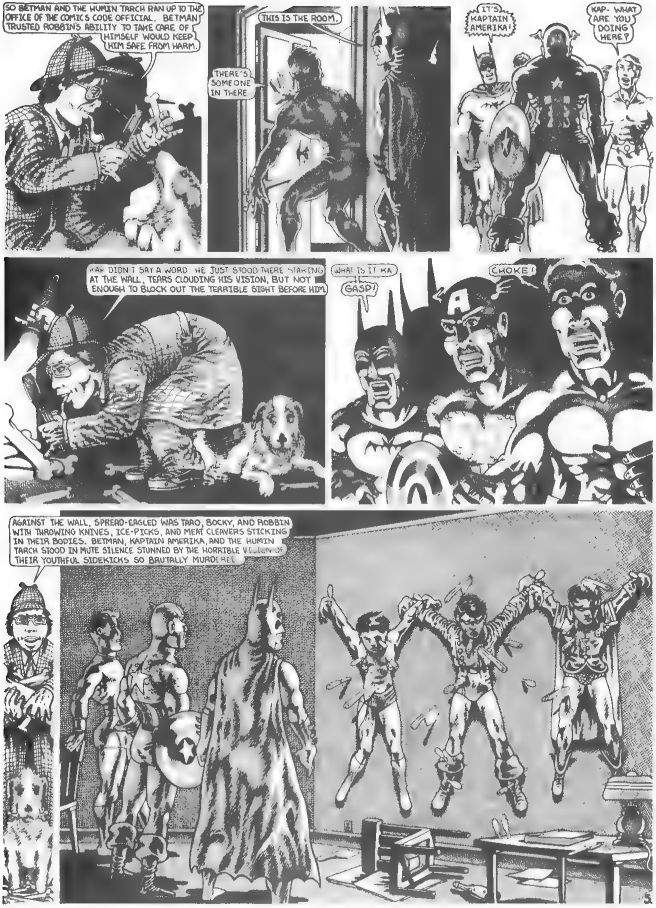

SO BETMAN AND THE WUMEN TARCH RAN UP TO THE OFFICE OF THE COMICS CODE OFFICIAL. BETMAN TRUSTED ROBBIN'S ABILITY TO TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF WOULD KEEP HIM SAFE FROM HARM.
THIS IS THE ROOM.
THERE'S SOMEONE IN THERE
(I'D) KAPTAIN AMERIKA!
KAP- WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
HE DIDN'T SAY A WORD. HE JUST STOOD THERE STARING AT THE WALL, TEARS CLOUDING HIS VISION, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO BLOCK OUT THE TERRIBLE SIGHT BEFORE HIM.
WHAT IS IT MA
GASP!
CHOKE!
AGAINST THE WALL, SPREAD-EAGLED WAS TARO, BOCKY, AND ROBBIN WITH THROWING KNIVES, ICE-PICKS, AND MEAT CLEAVERS STICKING IN THEIR BODIES. BETMAN, KAPTAIN AMERIKA, AND THE HUMIN TARCH STOOD IN MUTE SILENCE STUNNED BY THE HORRIBLE VIOLENCE THEIR YOUTHFUL SIDEKICKS SO BRUTALLY MURDERED

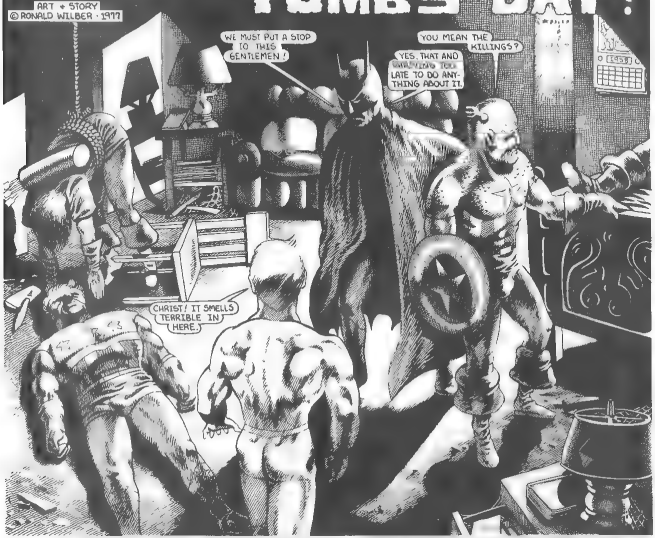
THIS WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE COVER-UP. THE PRESS NEVER LEARNED OF THESE MURDERS.
AND THE FUNERAL SERVICES WERE HELD SECRETLY. IT WAS A BALMY DAY.
A LOUSY DAY FOR ONE TO PAY HIS LAST RESPECTS, EVEN IF IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE MOOD.
BOCKY WAS MISSING, I COULDN'T FIND HIM ANYWHERE. I FINALLY FOUND HIM...
AT THE KANE HOTEL.
DEAD!
KRA-KOW
THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO TORO...
TO THINK I DENIED HORACE TO THAT BLOOM.
WHO DON'T HAVE DONE THIS?
HA-BOOM!
DEATH!
MY, MY, SUCH STARK DRAMA, ANYWAY. A SCREAM SUDDENLY PIERCED THE RAIN SOAKED AIR.
KRAK
AAAAARRGGHH
KOW
BOOM

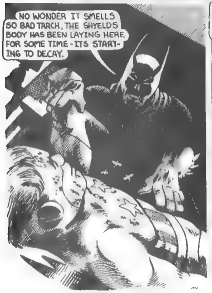
TWILIGHT OF THE HEROES PART - II

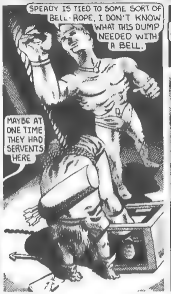
ART + STORY
© RONALD WILBER - 1997

ONCE MORE CAPTAIN AMERIKA, BETMAN AND THE HUMAN TARCH CAME UPON A SCENE OF HORROR, UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING EXCEPT GRIT THEIR TEETH AND SEARCH FOR CLUES, FOR ANY SCRAP OF INFORMATION WHICH MIGHT HELP THEM PREVENT ANOTHER HEROES DEATH, AND PUT AN END TO WHAT SEEMS TO BE A SUPER-HEROES -

TOMBS-DAY!


WE MUST PUT A STOP TO THIS GENTLEMEN!
YOU MEAN THE KILLINGS?
YES. THAT AND SWALLOWING TOO LATE TO DO ANY THING ABOUT IT.
CHRIST! IT SMELLS TERRIBLE IN HERE.




SPEADY IS TIED TO SOME SORT OF BELL - ROPE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS DUMP NEEDED WITH A BELL.
MAYBE AT ONE TIME THEY HAD SERVENTS HERE

7.

WAIT-A-MINUTE, THERE'S A PAPER ON THE BACK OF THE DOOR!
C'MON DON'T KEEP US IN SUSPENSE.
WHAT IS IT, BETMAN?
IT SEEMS OUR KILLER HAS FINALLY LEFT US SOMETHING TO GO ON. THIS IS A CLIPPING FROM JOHNY'S PAPER ABOUT A CONCERT BEING HELD TOMORROW.
TOMORROW? THIS IS OUR FIRST CLUE - WE HAVE TO GO TH-
YES WE'LL BE THERE KAP, AND WITH EVERY SUPER-HERO WE CAN MUSTER /
WELL, UNFORTUNATELY THEY COULDN'T MUSTER MANY HEROES. IT WASN'T THAT THE OTHER HEROES WERE APATHETIC. THEY WERE ALREADY ON OTHER CASES AND COULD NOT BE REACHED.
THEY WERE, HOWEVER, ABLE TO EANLIST THE AIDE OF WUNNER WOMAN, SUB-MARUNAR, AND AQUAN-MAN. THAT ISN'T TOO BAD, BESIDES, TWO OF THOSE GUYS SURE CAN SWIM - TOO BAD THEY WEREN'T GOING TO THE BEACH.
BETMAN THOUGHT THE CRIMES WERE COMMITTED BY COMMUNISTS. AFTER ALL, HADN'T NOTED COMMIE FIGHTERS, FIGHTIN' AMERIKANS AND SPEEDBOY, AND EVEN BOCKY BEEN DONE IN?
TAKE YOUR DOG TO LUNCH
HUMIN TARCH AND KAPTAIN AMERIKA HAD OTHER IDEAS. THE KILLER HAD JUST LEFT A CLUE, PERHAPS IT WAS THE JOKAR OR THE RIDDLOR.
...AT ANY RATE, THEY SOON E GATHERED ALL THEIR FORCES IN THE ALLEY BEHEIND THE THEATER.
BETMAN RAN THROUGH THEIR PLAN OF ACTION AGAIN.
SO, KAP AND I WILL GO INSIDE, TARCH AND SUB-MARUNAR YOU PATROL OVER AND AROUND THE THEATER, FROM THE AIR YOU SHOULD SPOT ANY SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR. WUNNER WOMAN YOU AND AQUAN-MAN GUARD THE ALLEY, EVERYONE GOT IT?
I THINK WE ALL UNDERSTAND.
YEAH, LET'S GO.
LATER, WHEN AQUAN-MAN IS ALONE WITH WUNNER WOMAN HE SHOWS HIS TRUE SELF-THE CAD!
(NOW WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH OUR TIME. IF THAT KILLER DOESN'T COME BY HERE?
WELL I DON'T KNOW BUT I HAVE AN IDEA...
AND WHAT'S THAT?
I HAVE AN IDEA SOMEONE'S GOING TO GET MY KNEE RIGHT IN HIS BALLS IF HE DOESN'T GET HIS FISHY HANDS OFF ME -
CUTE, HA/ HA/ HA/ VERY CUT-UGGH/
UNDERSTAND?
GLEEP!
8.

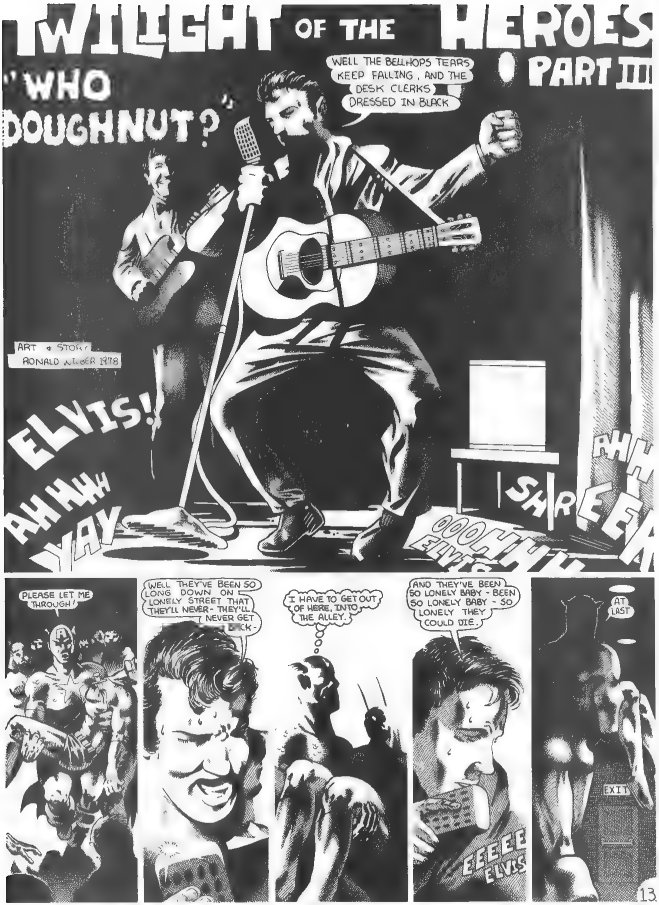
MEANWHILE INSIDE THE THEATER...
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN- ELVIS PRESLEY!
THANKYOU LADIES N GENTLEMEN...
YAY! CLAP! CLAP!
YAY! CLAP! CLAP!
YAY! CLAP! CLAP!
YAY!
YAY! CLAP! CLAP!
OOH ELVIS WOW!
HELL SINCE MY BABY LEFT ME...
WHO IS THIS GUY ?
HE'S A SINGER.
THANKS BETMAN. I REALLY NEEDED YOU TO TELL ME THAT.
GLAD TO HELP.
VERY FUNNY.
I FOUND A NEW PLACE TO DWELL...
LOOK KAP, SOMEONE IN A CLOAK - DEAR GOD- HE'S GOT A KNIFE!
WHERE IT DON'T
KAP
I'M GOING AFTER HIM. I'M SURE THATS OUR KILLER.
WAIT BETM- LOOK OUT! HE THREW HIS KNIFE!
BETMAN!
WELL ITS DOWN AT THE END OF LONELY STREET AT HEARTBREAK HOTEL
IT'S BEEN SO LONELY BABY, SO LONELY, BABY BABY SO LONELY .. I COULD DIE.
BETMAN!
HEY C'MON NOW SIT TODAY CAN I SEE ANYTHING
WHERE'S VIC?
THEY'RE RUINING THE SHOW!
WHO ROLL THOSE BONES?
SIT DOWN PLEASE NOW
MY KID'S GOTA WORK AT 6 O'CLOCK MEAT!
BOP BOP BOP
CRASH CRASH
9.

I'M GOING TO LAND AND TAKE A LOOK AROUND NOMOR.
ALRIGHT TARCH.
NOTHING'S GOING TA HAPPEN HERE TO NIGHT, WHAT A WASTE OF TIME.
PROBABLY NOTHING ON T.V. ANYWAY. LIFE CAN SURE BE DULL- WAIT. WHATS THAT SOUND
GR
No No
AAR
ARRRRR
RRRRGGGGGGHHHHH*
RROAOR!
THAT SOUNDED LIKE THE HUMIN TARCH.
I DON'T - UNNH - KNOW WHYD' YUH HAFTA KICK ME?
SHUT UP!
THAT DOES IT NO CHRISTMAS CARD FROM ME THIS YEAR.
A SCREAM BUT WHO?
STOPPED
IS THE TARCH HERE?
NO.
ARE YOU AFRAID THAT SCREAM WAS HIM?
I THOUGHT HE WAS WITH YOU.
ARE NO BERNOVA CARS EITHER?
I WISH HE WAS.
SUB-MARUNAR LANDED IN THE DARKENED ALLEY. HIS HOPES THAT THE TARCH MIGHT BE HERE, STILL ALIVE, SHATTERED. ONCE ENEMIES, THAT WAS NOW IN THE PAST. AND NOMOR WORRIED ABOUT HIS
WHAT HAPPENED TO AQUAN-MAN HE LOOKS LIKE HE JUST GOT KICKED IN THE
NEVER MIND THAT. I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE HUMIN TARCH.
GET UP AQUAN-MAN. YOU LOOK LIKE A FOOL.
YES MA'M / BITCH
GRROWLL
NOW WHAT SOUND IS THAT- IT'S LIKE A WILD BEAST.

TWILIGHT OF THE HEROES
PART II CONTINUED
ART & STORY ©1978 RONALD WILBER
IN THE SMALL AMOUNT OF LIGHT THAT LEAKED INTO THE ALLEY THEY SAW THE SOURCE OF THE SOUND - AN AWESOME MONSTER - WHO LEAPT AT THE SUB-MARINAR AS HE STOOD PETRIFIED BY THE SUDDENESS OF THE ATTACK!
GRROAR
A LION WITH THE HEAD OF MAN!
S A A PHINX!
YES DEAR READERS, THE LEGENDARY SPHINX OF EGYPT! BUT WHAT IS IT DOING HERE? WHAT IS ITS CONNECTION WITH THE MURDERS?? JUST WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON??? THESE AND MANY OTHER QUESTIONS WILL NOT BE ANSWERED IN THIS INSTALLMENT!!!!
IT'S STRENGTH IS INCREDIBLE -
GRROWLL
AND SO IS HIS BREATH! PHEW!
YOU'LL REGRET THIS DAY MONSTER!
I HOPE
11.

C'MON AQUAN-MAN WE HAVE TO HELP NOMOR!!!
WUNNER WOMAN SWUNG HER MAGIC LASSO
RR!?!
GOT HIM!
SWISH
MY COSTUME!
KLIP!
BUT THE SPHINX WAS TOO QUICK, TOO POWERFUL, AND WITH ONE SWIPE OF HIS PAW HE MADE SHREDS OUT OF THE ROPE AMONG OTHER THINGS.
HURRY UP AQUAN MAN HELP NOMOR, HE'S IN TROUBLE!
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?
FIGHT DAMMIT! MAKE SURE YOU'RE FLEIGHT.
LET ME CHECK AND SEE.
DAMMIT!
YOU NEVER STOP DO YOU?!
PERVERT!!!
I NEVER HAVE ANY FUN ARRGH!
SOCK!
AND WHAT OF SUB-MARUNAR MUST HE FIGHT THE SPHINX ALONE? WILL WUNNER WOMAN MERELY GIVE MORAL SUPPORT, OR WILL SHE GET THE SUPPORT SHE NEEDS, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY WILL I EVER FINISH THIS DAMN STRIP?!! FIND OUT NEXT TIME (MAYBE).
HA HA HA HA HA
THAT AQUAN-MAN REALLY CRACKS ME UP - WHAT A MORON! WOT A MORON!!!
MOOF! WOOF! WOOF!
GROWLL!

12.


TWILIGHT OF THE HEROES
PART III
WHO DOUGHNUT?
WELL THE BELLHOPS TEARS KEEP FALLING, AND THE DESK CLERKS DRESSED IN BLACK
ELVIS!
AH HAH YAY
SHREEK
PLEASE LET ME THROUGH!
WELL THEY'VE BEEN SO LONG DOWN ON LONELY STREET THAT THEY'LL NEVER GET BACK.
I HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE, INTO THE ALLEY.
AND THEY'VE BEEN SO LONELY BABY - BEEN SO LONELY BABY - SO LONELY THEY COULD DIE.
EEEEE ELVIS
AT LAST
EXIT

I DON'T THINK I COULD CARRY HIM MUCH LONGER
CLAP
HOORAY
THIS GUY IS HEAVY!!
ELVIS!
CLAP!
CLAP!
I KAPTAIN AMERIKA!
THAT'S MY NAME
HEY SURFACE-DWELLERS, HOWS ABOUT LENDING ME A HAND?
GRROARRR!
GOOD LORD!!! WHAT HAPPENED TO BETMAN?!!
A KNIFE IN THE CHEST — WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR COSTUME?!!
THAT BEAST TORE IT!!!
YOU MUST HELP NOMOR DEFEAT THAT MONSTER!
TREMENDOUS.
THEY SURE ARE.
YES IT IS A LARGE MONSTER.
AREN'T THOSE SUPER-HEROES DISGUSTING? A BUNCH OF REAL CHAUVINISTS! BUT I HAVE TO SWALLOW HARD AND DEPICT THIS STUFF, CAUSE IT'S ALL IN THESE FILES AND IT'S THE TRUTH. YOU SHOULD SEE SOME OF THE STUFF JIM AND I DECIDED WASN'T FIT TO PRINT.
LISTEN, DO YOU THINK I LIKE DRAWING STUFF LIKE YOU SEE ON THIS PAGE? A BIG BREASTED HALF-NAKED WOMAN, YOU THINK I LIKE THAT?!!
WOOF! WOOF!
SHUT-UP, NO ONE ASKED YOU!
I THINK HE HAS A CHANCE.
YOU DO?
WELL, A MILLION TO ONE, BUT A CHANCE.
YEAH, I GUESS.
I'M GOING TO HELP NOMOR. DO YOUR BREAST - A ER BEST TO MAKE HIM COMFORTABLE.
14.

I'LL HAVE TO TRY AND GET ON THE MONSTERS BACK, AND BREAK HIS NECK!
GRROARR
NOW, HOW TO HELP SUB-MARUNAR. I HAD TO LEAVE MY SHIELD BEHIND TO CARRY BETMAN.
WAIT-A-MINUTE THAT'S IT.
WUNNER WOMAN, THROW ME THAT KNIFE THAT'S STUCK IN BETMAN!
I CAN USE IT AS A WEAPON.
FINALLY, IT'S DEAD, I JUST HOPE I DIDN'T HURT MYSELF.
CRACK
ON SECOND THOUGHT YOU BETTER NOT THROW - THE KNIFE
HEY I KILLED THE MONSTER. I RECK
SUB-MARUNAR, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU BEFORE YOU DIE? WHAT DO YOU WANT?
TO DIE OF OLD AGE.
NOMOR - I'M SO SORRY!
IT'S NOT YOU'RE FAULT, I KNEW WHEN I GOT UP THIS MORNING I SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN BED - IT JUST WASN'T MY DAY.
SUFFERIN' SHARD, FIRST BETMAN AND NOW NOMOR.
I FEEL LIKE IT'S MY FAULT...
AND IT'S YOUR FAULT!
HEY YOU TOLD ME TO THROW THAT KNIFE!
WHO SAID YOU SHOULD LISTEN TO ME?
YOU BASTARD!
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WE?
STOP CRYING, I HAVE AN IDEA FOR SOMETHING WE CAN DO, BUT I NEED YOUR ANSWER FIRST
SOB SOB SOB
WHISPER-WHISPER-PSSST-HISST-MUMBLE-MUMBLE.
I CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO PARADISE ISLAND
AND AWAY FROM CREEPS LIKE YOU!
KRAPOW!
DOES THIS MEAN THE ANSWER IS NO?

MEANWHILE ON THE DOCKS OF THE CITY A SMALL GROUP OF SUPER-HEROES, BLECK KANARY, THE FLUSH, AND STUPORMAN GATHERED TO INVESTIGATE THE STRANGE DEATHS OF COMICS CODE WORKERS IN THIS AREA. EVERY VICTIM WAS COVERED WITH DOUGHNUT SHAPED MARKS, AND DRAINED OF EVERY DROP OF BLOOD.
LET'S LOOK AROUND AND GET OUT OF HERE I'M FREEZING.
LOOKING AT YOU IN IT CAN KEEP ME WARM.
THIS COSTUME ISN'T MUCH ON WARMTH.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
BUT WE KNOW - RIGHT READERS? HEH! HEH! HEH! WHAT A BUNCH OF PERVERTS!
NOW OUR THREE HEROES ONLY HAVE TO FIND OUT - WHO DOUGHNUT?
TWILIGHT OF THE HEROES PART III CONT.
ART & STORY- RON WILBER
I THINK I SHOULD SEARCH THE DOCKS WITH BLECK KANARY- YOU SEARCH THE WARE HOUSES.
WAIT-A-MINUTE, I THINK I SHOULD GO WITH BLECK KANARY YOU GO ALONE.
WHATS THE MATTER STUPOR MAN - SCARED TO GO ALONE?
NOT ON YOUR LIFE FLUSH!
OH BROTHER.
THAN YOU WON'T MIND GOING ALONE WHILE I GO WITH BLECK KANARY!
YOU JUST WANNA GO WITH BLECK KANARY CAUSE OF HER GREAT BIG -
YES?!!
A. ER.. EYES
I'M GOING WITH BLECK KANARY!
NO I AM!
YOU NEVER COULD STAND THE FACT THAT I CAN RUN FASTER THAN YOU!
FASTER THAN ME?!! HA! HA! HA! THAT'S A LAUGH! YOU DON'T LIKE THE FACT THAT I'M STRONGER THAN YOU!
STRONGER THAN ME?!! YOU COULDN'T BEAT A FIVE YEAR OLD CHILD AT ARM WRESTLING!!!
YEAH I KNOW, SO WHY WOULD SHE WANT TO GO WITH YOU?!!
IF BLECK KANARY GOES WITH ANYONE, SHE'S GONNA WANTA GO WITH SOMEONE WHO ISN'T ALL BRAWN BUT HAS SOME BRAINS!!!
I'LL GO AND INVESTIGATE BY MYSELF. THEY COULD TAKE ALL NIGHT, AND I'M COLD.
I'M GOING WITH HER!
NO ME!
ME
ME!
ME!

I WONDER WHAT THE FANS OF THOSE TWO IDIOTS WOULD THINK IF THEY COULD SEE HOW THEY CARRY ON?
I WANDER WHY I'M HERE?
NOW WHO IS THAT AT THE END OF THE PIER?
IT'S GOT TO BE EITHER SOME NUT WHO LIKES IT HERE OR... MAYBE OUR KILLER?
SIR, I'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOU...
PLEASE SIR...
HEY BUDDY, TURN AROUND, THIS IS BLECH KAVARY SPEAKING!
ALRIGHT C'MON YOU'RE GOING TO VISIT WITH MY FRIEND'S STUPORMAN AND THE FLUSH - DYA HEAR ME?
DYA HEAR - HEY WHAT IS THIS - WHAT ARE YOU?!!
SSHREEEEEEEK!
KNUNK!
SWISH
SWISH
WHUMP

DID THAT SCREAM SOUND LIKE BLECK KANARY?
BLECK WHO?
YOU KNOW, THE GIRL WITH THE GREAT BIG...
OH - THAT BLECK KANARY.
MAYBE ONE OF US SHOULD GO.
OKAY. GO AHEAD.
I CHECK?
I WAS THINKING OF YOU!
ME?
WHY ME?
WELL, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE ONE WHO'S SO DAMNED STRONG!
YEAH, BUT YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CAN RUN REAL FAST!
HEY, I'VE GOT AN IDEA- WHY NOT GO ALPHABETICALLY?
IN THAT CASE, I GO FIRST!
OKAY? SOUNDS FAIR-
THANKS FOR VOLUNTEERING!
I CAN'T STAND THAT GUY - NOW WHO'S THAT UP AHEAD?
WHIZZZZZZ
ZOOMM
WHIZZ
YIKES IT'S A MONSTER!!!
SCREEECCCHH
SCREEEECH
GANGWAY - A MONSTER!!!
WHAT'S THAT ON YOUR SHOULDER?
HUH?
IT LOOKS LIKE A TENTACLE...
WELL, WHAT DYA KNOW- IT IS A TENTACLE!
HELP!! SOME MONSTER HAS ME!!!
IT'S NO MONSTER JUST A GIANT OCTOPUS, BUT I SUPPOSE YOU COULD CALL IT A-
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU CALL IT, IT'S SUCKING THE BLOOD OUT OF MY BODY!!
HELP!!!

HELP!!! ? CHOKE ! GASP!!!
I'M GOING TO HIT THIS SLIMY THING OKAY FLUSH ?
GWAK! ? CHOKE ! ? GASP!!! SPUTTER !!!
NO COMMENT HUH ?
SPLAT!
BOOM!
I PUT TOO MUCH FORCE IN THAT PUNCH!
IT DIDN'T HELP FLUSH MUCH, HE'S DONE FOR
THIS IS TERRIBLE!
LOOK AT HOW MESSED UP MY COSTUME IS -
JUST TERRIBLE!
I'LL HAVE TO GO HOME AND CHANGE.
HEAVY WHALE!
DO YOU BELIEVE THIS - LOOK AT THEM FOLLOW THAT SLIMER!!!
YEAH, HE MUST HAVE SOME KIND OF APPEAL!
THEY SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN WE'RE HERE!
ELVIS!
ELVIS!
IF THEY EVEN KNOW WHO WE ARE.
ELVIS!
I KNOW!
WHAT DO YOU WANT LITTLE GIR-AAAAG!!!
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, YOU'RE THAT JERK WHO TRIED TO RUIN THE CONCERT!
KICK!
HA! HA! HA! - OH DEAR, I SHOULDN'T LAUGH AT YOUR BUDDY SHOULD I AQUAN-MAN?
THATS ALRIGHT, YOU'RE MY BUDDY TOO - I MIGHT SAY MY BOSOM BUDDY.
OWWW! YOU KNOW, I HATE KIDS!
HAVE I MILKED ENOUGH HUMOR OUT OF WUNNER WOMANS BOSOM?

I'M TURNING MY BACK ON THIS WHOLE SUPER-HERO BUSINESS, AND SO IS MY DOG. I THOUGHT THE TOPLESS WUNNER WOMAN SEGMENT WAS PRETTY TASTELESS AND THIS SEGMENT ISN'T MUCH BETTER. HOWEVER, JIM VAN HISE (WORLD FAMOUS FANZINE PUBLISHER - EDITOR) AND MYSELF, RONALD WILBER (BOY-WONDER COMIC ARTIST) HAVE OUR INTEGRITY AND HAVE DECIDED TO PRESENT THIS EPISODE EXACTLY AS THE OLD FILES RECORD IT. IF ANYONE IS OFFENDED I'M SORRY, BUT THE TRUTH MUST COME OUT.

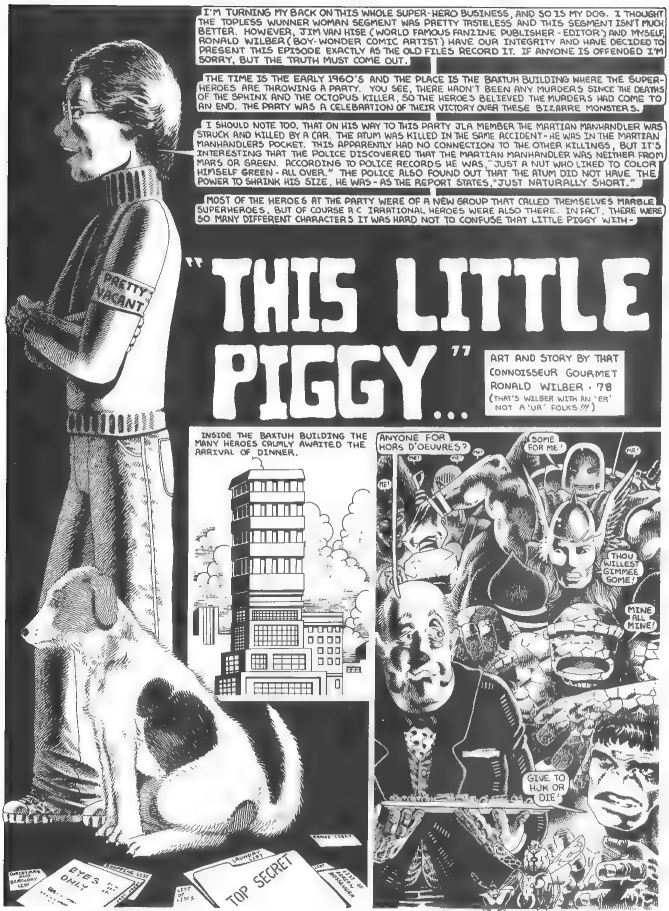
THE TIME IS THE EARLY 1960'S AND THE PLACE IS THE BAKTUH BUILDING WHERE THE SUPER-HEROES ARE THROWING A PARTY. YOU SEE, THERE HADN'T BEEN ANY MURDERS SINCE THE DEATHS OF THE SPHINX AND THE OCTOPUS KILLER, SO THE HEROES BELIEVED THE MURDERS HAD COME TO AN END. THE PARTY WAS A CELEBARTION OF THEIR VICTORY OVER THESE BIZARRE MONSTERS.

I SHOULD NOTE TOO, THAT ON HIS WAY TO THIS PARTY JLA MEMBER THE MARTIAN MANHANDLER WAS STRUCK AND KILLED BY A CAR. THE ATUM WAS KILLED IN THE SAME ACCIDENT - HE WAS IN THE MARTIAN MANHANDLERS POCKET. THIS APPARENTLY HAD NO CONNECTION TO THE OTHER KILLINGS, BUT IT'S INTERESTING THAT THE POLICE DISCOVERED THAT THE MARTIAN MANHANDLER WAS NEITHER FROM MARS OR GREEN. ACCORDING TO POLICE RECORDS HE WAS, "JUST A NUT WHO LIKED TO COLOR HIMSELF GREEN - ALL OVER." THE POLICE ALSO FOUND OUT THAT THE ATUM DID NOT HAVE THE POWER TO SHRINK HIS SIZE, HE WAS - AS THE REPORT STATES, "JUST NATURALLY SHORT."

MOST OF THE HEROES AT THE PARTY WERE OF A NEW GROUP THAT CALLED THEMSELVES MARBLE SUPERHEROES. BUT OF COURSE A C IRRATIONAL HEROES WERE ALSO THERE. IN FACT, THERE WERE SO MANY DIFFERENT CHARACTERS IT WAS HARD NOT TO CONFUSE THAT LITTLE PIGGY WITH -

"THIS LITTLE PIGGY..."

ART AND STORY BY THAT CONNOISSEUR GOURMET RONALD WILBER · 78
(THAT'S WILBER WITH AN 'ER' NOT A 'UR' FOLKS !!!)


PRETTY VACANT
INSIDE THE BAKTUH BUILDING THE MANY HEROES GRUMPY AWAITED THE ARRIVAL OF DINNER.
ANYONE FOR HORS D'OEUVRES?
SOME FOR ME!
THOU WILLEST GIMPSEE SOME!
MINE ALL MINE!
GIVE TO HUK OR DIE!
EYES ONLY
TOP SECRET

ANYONE GOT A CAN-OPENER?
I'M NOT PARANOID, I JUST KNOW FOR A FACT THAT EVERYONE HERE HATES ME!
I'M SUCH A LITTLE ANGEL
BOY- IS IT HOT IN HERE! I CAN'T TAKE IT TORSH
VERILY IF WE DOTH NOT EAT SOON MY STOMACH SHALL BE MIGHTY SORE!
SOME LEMONADE, SIR?
THAT'S FUNNY ICEY-MAN, I'M JUST COMFORTABLE
I SHOULD CALL ROM MAC
GOOD LORD NO! IT'S YELLOW!
THEY CALL ME THE BEAST, - SO I HOP AROUND LIKE AN ANIMAL - DOES THAT MAKE ME BEASTIAL?
WELL, HELLO MAD! WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE DEATHS OF THOSE MONSTERS?
YOU KNOW, IT WAS US A.C. HEROES WHO DID ALL THE WORK
YOU MARBLE HEROES WERE WORTHLESS!
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT MY FRIEND?
URP!
MUMBLE - MUMBLE - PSSST - WHISPER - PSSST - PSST - WHISPER - MUMBLE
HA! HA! HA! HA! — I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE THE CONSERVATIVE MR. READ RICHARDS WOULD EVER DO THAT!
HA! HA! IT'S TRUE
HA! HA! HA!
LET ME TELL YOU - SEW AND HONK-GIRL- I DON'T CALL THE BEASTIAL - BEASTIAL - JUST BECAUSE OF HIS MUTANT ANIMAL POWERS
OH REALLY. TELL US ALL ABOUT IT.

EVENTUALLY DINNER WAS BROUGHT IN COVERED TO KEEP IT WARM OF COURSE.
JESUS, THIS THING IS HEAVY- WHATS IN HERE LEAD BARS?
I DUNNO- IT'S LIKE A DEAD WEIGHT
BUT WHEN THE MAIN COURSE WAS UNCOVERED A SCENE OF SHOCK AND HORROR GREETED THE EYES OF THE MANY HEROES. WONDER WOMAN LAY IN A CROUCHED POSITION, HER FLESH BROWNED TO A CRISP, AND IN HER MOUTH A JUICY RED APPLE / OBVIOUSLY THE MURDERS WERE NOT OVER YET.
OMIGAWD / HOW HORRIBLE. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO EAT NOW?!
THIS IS TERRIBLE WHERE'S THE GRAVY DON'T WE GET ANY GRAVY ?!/
WHAT IS IT, I CAN'T SEE?!
I WANT LIGHT MEAT NOT DARK MEAT!!
ARE WE HAVING BIRD? IF SO - I WANT A BREAST!
LOOK AT HER - JUST LOOK AT HER AQUAN - MAN.
WHAT AN AWFUL WAY TO DIE, TO BE COOKED.
TO COOK THAT SOFT TENDER SENSUOUS FLESH!!
DESPITE IT ALL SHE'S STILL BEAUTIFUL
BEAUTIFUL?
YES - JUST LOOK AT HER, HER FULL SHAPELY BODY CRUELLY BOUND WITH ROPE, TOTALLY HELPLESS, AND YET TOTALLY FEMININE - TOTALLY EROTIC, HER COOKED FLESH STILL CRAVING TO BE TOUCHED - TO BE HELD - TO...
STOP IT! STOP IT!! YOU'RE MAKING ME CRAZY!!!
DO YOU KNOW WHERE AQUAN - MAN WENT?
HE LEFT - HE WAS MUMBLING SOME THING ABOUT TAKING A COLD SHOWER.
MMM IDEA! NOT A BAD
BUMP!
WHY DON'T YOU WATCH WHERE YOU'RE GOING YOU UGLY GREEN MONSTER!
WHY YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE A DECENT COSTUME!
GRRRR! HUH DON'T LIKE BLUE-UNDER!

HUK TEACH BLUE HAIR A LESSON!
YOU COULDN'T TEACH ME ANYTHING YOU STUPID MONSTER!!
GRRRRAG!!!
BAM!
HA! HA! HA! HA! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE FOR YOU TO HURT ME, I'M STUPORMAN!
WHY NOT TRY AGAIN UGLY- OR DIDN HURT YOUR HANDY-WANDY?
YES, HUK TRY AGAIN, BUT THIS TIME HUK WILL HURT BLUE-HAIRED SUPER-EGO!
NOW THAT HURT.
BLAM!
SEVERAL SUPER-HEROES WENT TO FIND STUPORMAN. BUT IT WAS DEREDEVYL AND MARBLE GIRL WHO FOUND HIM, OR SHOULD I SAY HIS CORPSE. STUPORMANS EYES HAD BEEN PLUCKED OUT AND REPLACED WITH KRYPTONITE EYES FROM A RARE DOLL FROM THE PLANET KRYPTON. TERRIBLE - TO RUIN A DOLL LIKE THAT.
DECLAN MAC MANUS' BIGGEST FAN!
DISGUSTING. IT MAKES ME FEEL SICK - I GET A REAL EMPTY FEELING IN THE PIT OF MY STOMACH.
YEAH I KNOW, I'M HUNGRY TOO. WHERE DO YOU WANT TO EAT?
I TELL YOU MARBLE GIRL, I'M KINDA IN THE MOOD FOR CHINESE FOOD
WELL, I FEEL LIKE ITALIAN
I'M PAYING THOUGH, AND I SAY CHINESE.
ITALIAN
CHINESE
CHINESE (ITALIAN)
OKAY ITALIAN
AH! SO SHEH YOU TRI HUG TYE

THAT'S STRANGE...
MY SPIDER SENSE...
IT'S TINGLING!
TWILIGHT OF THE HEROES PART V
STRUNG ALONG
ART AND STORY BY RONALD WILBER '78

WHATEVER IS CAUSING MY SPIDER-SENSE TO ACT UP, MUST BE IN THIS ALLEY!
WELL, WHAT THE- WHO ARE YOU GUYS?
THUD!
DON'T BE AFRAID. WE'RE REAL KNIFE PEOPLE!
YEAH, REAL CUT-UPS!
YIKES!
LET'S CUT THIS SHORT— SHALL WE?
LET'S!
I BETTER GET OUT OF HERE!

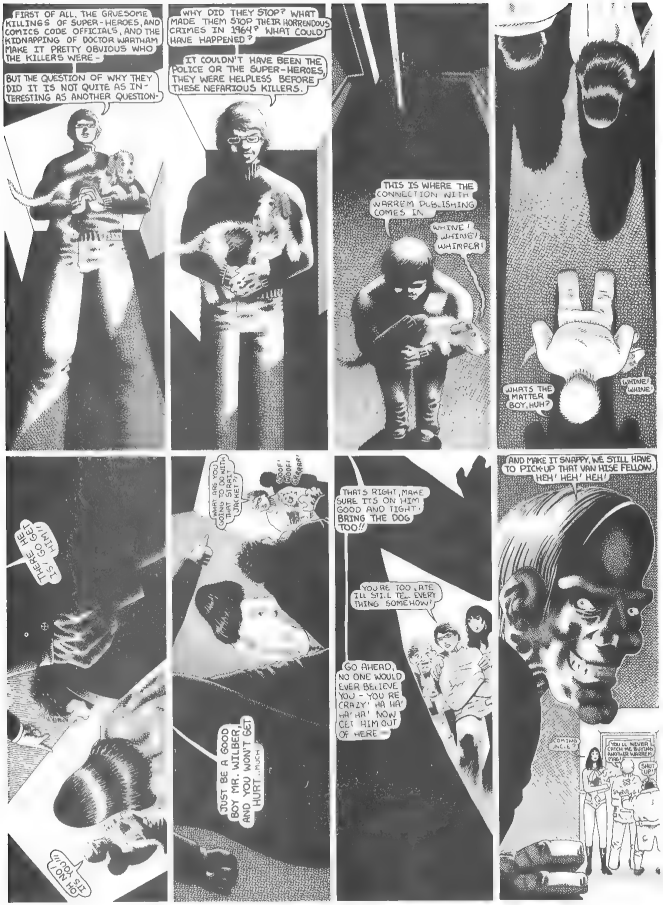
POOR SPYDAR-MAN DIDN'T GET VERY FAR, HE WAS FOUND IN AN OLD BUILDING. HIS BODY HAD BEEN CUT INTO SECTIONS. INTERESTINGLY, EACH SECTION-
WAS HELD TOGETHER BY TINY HINGES SCREWED IN HIS JOINT BONES. COUNTLESS FINE, ALMOST INVISIBLE STRINGS RAN FROM EACH MOVABLE SECTION TO A CEILING BEAM OVER HEAD.
GRINNING MARIONETTES WERE FOUND SPRAWLED ON THE BEAM, HIS STRINGS IN THEIR LIFELESS HANDS - AND TALK ABOUT UGLY MARIONETTES!
GREEM LAMTERN WAS FOUND BARBEQUED ON A GRILL. HE WAS DEAD - MEDIUM RARE - BUT HIS BODY WAS VERY HUNGRY.
MARBLE GIRL WAS FOUND DEAD AT A BEACH AMUSEMENT PARK. SHE HAD BEEN PUSHED FROM A ROLLER COASTER AT IT'S HIGHEST POINT, AND SHE TOOK THE SHORT WAY DOWN
AS THE MURDERS CONTINUED MAD DESPERATELY SOUGHT TO FIND A REASON FOR THE KILLINGS OF SUPER-HEROES AND COMICS CODE WORKERS.
DID THE RECENT DISAPPEARANCE OF PSYCHIATRIST-FREDERIC WARTHAM - HAVE ANY THING TO DO WITH IT? STILL THE KILLINGS WENT ON
HONKMAN WAS BEEN DECIEVED INTO KILLING HONKGIRL ON A STAGE IN FRONT OF 500 PEOPLE. IT WAS QUITE A SHOW!
BOO!
BOO!
BOO!
BOO!
BOO!
OH NO!! GOILS!!
SOME SHOW! THIS STINKS!
GET THAT GUY OFF!
SEW STURM, THE INVISIBLE GIRL WAS FOUND STRETCHED ON A STRETCH RACK. DEAD. BUT NEVER AGAIN TO BE CALLED SHORTY

THEN CAME THE MOST HIDEOUS CRIME YET. A CRIME COMITTED IN A BASEBALL STADIUM, THE PLACE OF AMERICAS FAVORITE PAST-TIME TURNED INTO A GRIM CHANNEL HOUSE OF MURDER. THE FIELD WAS LITTERED WITH CORPSES HACKED APART THE BODIES OF THE FINTASTAC FOUR: THE THUNG, MR. FINTASTIC, AND THE HUMAN TORCH WERE FOUND DISMEMBERED-
AND USED TO PLAY A GAME OF BASEBALL. POLICE WERE IN A QUANDARY. WHAT COULD THEY DO? THERE WAS NO CLUE AS TO WHO COMITTED THE CRIMES, AND WORST OF ALL: TONIGHTS BALL GAME WOULD HAVE TO BE CALLED OFF!
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY READ RITCHERDS WOULD LOSE HIS HEAD - OR THAT I COULD MAKE SUCH A LOUSY JOKE.
BUT MAKE THE JOKE HE DID
SUPER-HEROES HAVE NO SHAME!
AS IF THIS CRIME WERE NOT ENOUGH THE DISMEMBERED BODIES OF THE AVENGERS, IRONED MAN, THE MIGHTY THUR, AND THE HUK WERE ALSO FOUND ON THE SAME FIELD. A GRIM NOTE BY THEIR BODIES WAS DISCOVERED. IT READ, "MORE BODIES FOR FUTURE GAMES"
ENTMAN AND THE WISP WERE FOUND MUCH LATER. APPARENTLY THEY HAD MADE AN ESCAPE OUT OF THE STADIUM, BUT WERE KILLED INADVERTENTLY BY A WELL MEANING GARDENER WITH A CAN OF DDT. WHEN INFORMED OF HIS MISTAKE, THE GARDENER, WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES COULD ONLY SAY, "GOSH, I FEEL LIKE SUCH A JERK!"
I GUESS THIS ANSWERS THE QUESTION OF WHETHER HE WAS REALLY IMMORTAL OR NOT!
YEAH, SURE GLAD I DON'T HAVE TO CLEAN THIS UP!
O'MALEY - I GOT A JOB FOR YOU!
YES SIR LIEUTENANT
WHAT IS IT?
BUT STILL, THE HORROR WAS NOT OVER FOR ON THAT VERY SAME FIELD WERE THE DISMEMBERED BODIES OF THE EX-MEN, THE BEASTIAL, ICEY-MAN, SYKLOPS, AND THE ANGLE. BY THESE CORPSES ANOTHER NOTE WAS FOUND, IT SAID," STILL MORE BODIES FOR FUTURE GAMES, SO SUE US WE PLAY A LOT OF BASE-BALL."
ALSO ON THE SCENE OF HORROR WAS PROFESSOR EXAVIOR. WHO'S MIND WAS NOW GONE. POLICE FIGURED IT WAS THE SIGHT OF HIS YOUNG PUPILS SO BRUTALY MURDERED THAT DROVE HIM MAD. THE POLICE DISCOVERED ALSO, THAT EXAVIOR DID HAVE THE POWER TO WALK, BUT DELIGHTED IN HAVING PEOPLE WHEEL HIM AROUND AND DO THINGS FOR HIM. IN THE OPINION OF THE POLICE" HE WAS A LEACH."
CLEAN UP ALL THIS MESS WILL YOU?
YES SIR
DAMN HELL
HA HA HA HA!

THE MURDERS AT THE BASEBALL PARK SPARKED KAPTAIN AMERIKA'S MEMORY. HE THOUGHT HE REMEMBERED THIS HORRENDOUS FORM OF MURDER FROM SOMEWHERE, AND HE FOUND THE ANSWER EXACTLY WHERE HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE - IN BOCKY'S COMIC-BOOK COLLECTION!
WITH GROWING FASCINATION KAP LEAFED THROUGH THE OLD COMIC BOOKS IN BOCKY'S ROOM, THEY CONTAINED MANY ANSWERS HE HAD BEEN SEEKING.
"IT'S ALL HERE, ALL THE MURDERS ARE IN THESE COMIC-BOOKS! EVERY STRANGE KILLING WAS TAKEN FROM ONE OF THE STORIES IN HAUNT OF FEAR, VAULT OF HORROR, TALES FROM THE CRYPT OR SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES! OLD HORROR COMICS!"
THESE ARE ALL E.C. COMICS. BOCKY WAS A FANATIC COLLECTOR OF THEM, HE SAID THEY WERE THE BEST.
TWILIGHT OF THE HEROES
PART VI
"BEDTIME GORY"
HE USED TO BE MAD AT ME BECAUSE I COULDN'T SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COMIC ART AND GHOSTS.
ALL THE EARLY MURDERS MOST OF THEM WERE MADE IN THEIR SICK MINDS AS I REMEMBER IT. ROBBIN, TARO SHROUD AND SPEEDBOY MIGHT BE E.C. FANS.
THAT BOOK WRITTEN BY DOCTOR WARTHAM AND THE COMICS CODE HELPED PUT E.C. OUT OF BUSINESS. IT'S ALL BEGINNING TO FIT TOGETHER. MAYBE THIS NOTE I FOUND IN ONE OF BOCKY'S COMICS WILL EXPLAIN MORE.
WOW... [illegible] ...LONG IT WANT THE WHOLE STORY COME TO [illegible] AND IT GIVES AN ADDRESS.
I'VE GOT TO GO, TRAP OR NOT I MUST KNOW THE COMPLETE STORY.

PRIMUS KAP DID LEARN THE COMPLETE STORY BEFORE HE WAS KILLED. HE WAS MISSING FOR ABOUT A WEEK BEFORE DR. STRENGE WAS BROUGHT IN TO HELP LOCATE HIM. THE DOCTOR FOUND HIM IN NO TIME — ESPECIALLY AFTER HE GOT A MYSTERIOUS LETTER TELLING HIM WHERE TO FIND THE BODY.
HA! HA! HA!
GOOD LORD!
GASP!
CHOKE!
SO FOUND WAS THE MISSING DOCTOR MARTHAM, WHO WAS NOW A HOPELESSLY RAVING LUNATIC. TIED TO A CHAIR, HE MERELY LAUGHED AT THE HORRIBLE SCENE BEFORE HIM.
KAP WAS FOUND STRUNG UPSIDE DOWN, A TAP INSERTED IN HIS JUGULAR VEIN, AND HIS BODY DRAINED OF BLOOD. DEREDEVIL, DR. STRENGE, AND AQUA-MAN STOOD BELOW HELPLESS TO DO ANYTHING.
UNDOUBTEDLY HE TOOK THE SECRET WITH HIM.
HE MUST HAVE KNOWN WHO DID THIS!
NO-ONE KNEW IT YET BUT THIS WOULD BE THE LAST MURDER. STILL SUPER-HEROES AND POLICE HAD NO IDEA WHO COMITTED THE KILLINGS.
HE HAD BEEN DRIVEN INSANE THROUGH FORCED VIEWING OF VIOLENT COMIC PAGES IN E.C. COMICS.
TODAY HE RESIDES IN A HOSPITAL IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. AN INCURABLE CASE.
HA! HA! HA! HA!

THAT'S THE WAY THE CASE ENDED BACK IN 1964. A COMPLETE MYSTERY, SUPPRESSED AND UNSOLVED ALL THESE LONG YEARS. I WOULD NEVER HAVE GOTTEN THE FACTS IF SOMEONE HADN'T DECIDED TO BREAK THE SILENCE AND REVEAL THE TRUTH.
USING THE PAPERS AND FILES I HAVE BEEN GIVEN, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COME UP WITH WHAT I BELIEVE IS A REASONABLE SOLUTION TO THIS CASE.
BEFORE I GET INTO THE SOLUTION OF THESE BIZARRE CRIMES, I WANT TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE COMICS PUBLISHERS, MARBLE, AND A.C IRRATIONAL — I THOUGHT THEIR BEHAVIOR WAS DISGUSTING! BEFORE THIS EXPOSE WAS PRINTED, THEY TRIED TO BRIBE JIM VAN HISE INTO NOT PRINTING IT! THEY ALSO TRIED TO BUY ME OFF!! ALL I CAN SAY IS HA! HA! HA!
DON'T THOSE BOOKS REALIZE THE TERM OF JIM HISE AND WILHELM CAN'T BE BOUGHT OFF? WE HAVE INTEGRITY!
EDITOR'S NOTE —
I MIGHT CONSIDER BEING BOUGHT FOR 10, BIG ONES!
LOOK AT THOSE LETTERS ON THAT FILE CABINET. THAT'S JUST A SMALL PORTION OF THE LETTERS WE RECIEVED FROM THE COMIC PUBLISHERS OFFERING A PAY-OFF. WE EVEN GOT LETTERS FROM WARREM PUBLISHING, AND THEY WEREN'T MENTIONED.
JIM WARREM OUTSMARTED HIMSELF THOUGH. HIS INTEREST IN SUPPRESSING THIS STORY HELPED ME SOLVE THE CASE.
I JUST ASKED MYSELF WHAT WARREM PUBLISHING HAD TO LOSE IF THIS STORY WAS PRINTED. WHAT COULD IT BE? THAT, COMBINED WITH THE OTHER PARTS OF THIS PUZZLE SOON MADE EVERYTHING ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO ME ANYWAY.
10 BIG ONES EH?
EDITOR


FIRST OF ALL, THE GRUESOME KILLINGS OF SUPER-HEROES, AND COMICS CODE OFFICIALS, AND THE KIDNAPPING OF DOCTOR WARTHAM MAKE IT PRETTY OBVIOUS WHO THE KILLERS WERE -
BUT THE QUESTION OF WHY THEY DID IT IS NOT QUITE AS INTERESTING AS ANOTHER QUESTION-
WHY DID THEY STOP? WHAT MADE THEM STOP THEIR HORRENDOUS CRIMES IN 1964? WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED?
IT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN THE POLICE OR THE SUPER-HEROES, THEY WERE HELPLESS BEFORE THESE NEFARIOUS KILLERS.
THIS IS WHERE THE CONNECTION WITH WARREN PUBLISHING COMES IN
WHINE! WHIMPER!
WHAT'S THE MATTER BOY, HUH?
WHINE! WHINE!
THERE, THERE, BOY!
DON'T HURT ME!
JUST BE A GOOD BOY MR. WILBER, AND YOU WON'T GET HURT... MUCH!
THAT'S RIGHT, MAKE SURE IT'S ON HIM GOOD AND TIGHT! BRING THE DOG TOO!!
YOU'RE TOO LATE I'LL STILL TE... EVERYTHING SOMEHOW!
GO AHEAD, NO ONE WOULD EVER BELIEVE YOU - YOU'RE CRAZY! HA HA HA HA! NOW GET HIM OUT OF HERE -
AND MAKE IT SNAPPY, WE STILL HAVE TO PICK UP THAT VAN HIRE FELLOW.
HEH! HEH! HEH!
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
OH, I NEVER'LL CATCH ME BUTCHER HARVEY HARRIS!
SHUT UP!

I'M CRAZY.

YES, THAT'S WHAT THEY WANT YOU TO BELIEVE, THAT I'M CRAZY. WHO WOULD BELIEVE A MADMAN? BUT I'M AS SANE AS ANYONE OF YOU WHO ARE READING THIS. AS YOU KNOW, THESE KILLINGS FIRST BEGAN IN 1955 WITH THE KILLING OF COMICS CODE OFFICIALS, AND THEN SUPER-HEROES. IF THE SUPER-HERO MURDERS SEEMED FAMILIAR, IT'S BECAUSE THEY WERE. AS KAPTAIN AMERIKA DISCOVERED THEY WERE ALL FROM E.C. HORROR COMICS! THE SPHINX MONSTER FROM "TOMBS DAY" IN VAULT OF HORROR #35, THE OCTOPUS KILLER FROM "WHO DOUGHNUT?" IN VAULT OF HORROR #30, WUNNER WOMAN BEING COOKED TO DEATH FROM "THIS LITTLE PIGGY..." IN HAUNT OF FEAR #19, MARBLE GIRL THROWN FROM A ROLLER COASTER FROM "SQUEEZE PLAY" IN SHOCK SUSPENSTORIES #13, STUPORMANS EYES REPLACED WITH THE EYES OF A DOLL FROM "SHOE-BUTTON EYES" IN VAULT OF HORROR #35, AND OF COURSE THE BASEBALL MURDERS FROM "FOUL PLAY" IN HAUNT OF FEAR #19, AND THE TAP IN KAPTAIN AMERIKAS NECK FROM "MIDNIGHT MASS" IN TALES FROM THE CRYPT #35, AND ALMOST ALL THE OTHER SUPER-HERO MURDERS WERE FROM E.C. HORROR COMICS! WHO DID THE KILLINGS? THE THREE E.C. WITCHES OF COURSE! THE CRYPT KEEPER, THE OLD WITCH, AND THE VAULT KEEPER! WHY DID THEY DO IT? WELL, OBVIOUSLY REVENGE AGAINST THE COMICS CODE AND DOCTOR WARTHAM, AND PROBABLY ANGER AT THE SUPER-HEROES BECAUSE THEY COULD CONTINUE THEIR ADVENTURES WHILE THE WITCHES WERE CURTAILED.

HOW DOES WARREN PUBLICATIONS FIT IN? IN 1964, AS I SAID IN PART ONE OF THIS EXPOSE' THE MURDERS CAME TO A HALT. WHY? BECAUSE THE THREE WITCHES FOUND EMPLOYMENT IN 1964 WITH JIM WARREN AS UNCLE KREEPY, COUSIN ERIE, AND VAMPIRARLLA! WARREN BEGAN KREEPY IN 1964 AND SLOWLY INTRODUCED THE OTHERS SLOWLY MAYBE, TO AVOID SUSPICION BY STARTING ALL THREE AT ONCE. HOW DID THE WITCHES CHANGE APPEARENCE? WELL, THE OLD WITCH IS A VAMPIRE NOW, PERHAPS SHE JUST REGAINED HER YOUTH AND BECAME VAMPIRARLLA BY DRINKING KAPTAIN AMERIKAS BLOOD, HIS BLOOD HAD BEEN DRAINED AS YOU WILL RECALL. THE OTHERS HAD PLASTIC SURGERY, OR MAYBE MORE LIKELY, SINCE THEY WERE WITCHES, THEY CAST A SPELL CHANGING THEIR APPEARENCE! REMEMBER HOW WARREN SEEMED LIKE IT MIGHT BECOME THE NEW E.C. BY USING THE TALENTS OF FRAZETTA, WILLIAMSON, DAVIS, ORLANDO AND MANY OTHER E.C. ALUMNI? OF COURSE, THIS NEVER CAME TO PASS, AND GRADUALLY OVER THE YEARS WE'VE BEEN LESS AND LESS OF UNCLE KREEPY AND COUSIN ERIE. WHAT I WORRY ABOUT IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THEY BECOME DISSATISFIED WITH THIS? WILL THEY GO ON ANOTHER RAMPAGE? WILL THERE BE MORE SENSELESS KILLINGS? NEXT TIME, WHO WILL STOP THEM?!!

THIS PAGE WAS SMUGGLED OUT TO ME FROM HIS CAPTIVE HOSPICE WHERE RON IS BEING HELD BY THE GIVEN SNIVEL. WHERE RON IS BEING HELD BY MUMBLING GIBBER GIBBER GRRR HEH HEH AND IS HEARD HE IS DUE TO BE RELEASED BACK INTO THE WILD IN TWO WEEKS. HOPE - AND IT'S SURE BEEN A LONG, LONG, LONG TIME SINCE I'VE HOPED FOR ANYTHING - AND I'D BE C. READERS, THAT AFTER A SHORT REST FROM THIS TASK, I'LL BE BACK TO NORMAL AGAIN. I BELIEVE YOU DESERVE NOTHING LESS. I REALLY DON'T. SO I'LL BE BACK WITH ALL MY HEART. I REALLY HAPPEN! I BELIEVE YOU DESERVE NOTHING LESS. I REALLY HAPPEN! I BELIEVE YOU DESERVE READERS WILL HAVE TO DECIDE FOR YOURSELVES.
THEY NEVER GOT ME !!$
THE DOOR - SEE WHO IT IS DEAR - OH NO! IT'S THEM!!
PUT DOWN THAT STRAIT-JACKET - HELP!!!

ELVES

We had already ended the book before making the decision to include this chapter. It does not truely fit in with the rest of the book and is not a tribute to the past. Instead it is a harbinger of the future. Here Wendy Pini reveals the genesis of her remarkable saga of elves. Her creation, *Elfquest*, has done the impossible. It is the only small press comic book story to ever reach mass proportions. It is not the creation of a corporate giant but of a dedicated pair of creators. After being turned down by both Marvel and DC Comics—at the time the only viable publishers—and after one disasterous encounter with a small publisher—they created their own company to release their own product. And it caught on.

A torrent of merchandise followed. Playboy Books released a paperback. Donning Books created four, full color graphic tradebacks for release to book stores. And now Marvel Comics is about to rerelease the series as regular comic books.

Perhaps another book may have been able to create this phenomenon and lead the way for other imaginative worlds to see the light of day. But none did. Perhaps another writer and artist could have blazed the path. But none did. Since then many have tried but none has achieved this level of success. Perhaps one will. But as of now none have. Here Wendy tells the story in her own words.

The Spinning of ELFQUEST

or

WELCOME BACK CUTTER

by Wendy Pini

The homogenized term *Little People* encompasses all of the various inhabitants of Faerie—but in no way defines them. Their shapes, sizes, racial characteristics and personality traits are endless. But with all due respect to the others, I must confess a special fondess for Elves. It is a love and understanding based not so much on the tenets of Earthly legend, but on something deeper—a kinship, almost. After all, the name Wendy means "Elfin Wanderer."

In the omnivorous mixmaster of recorded history, the folklore of ancient Mediterranean and Britannic cultures, plus a healthy dash of Germanic mythology, were thrown together to produce what we now recognize on Keebler cookie packages as an Elf. That is, a funny little man with lederhosen and pointed ears. The ears are essential. The symbolism goes back a long way to the half-beast, half-human deities of ancient legend. It can even be seen in the exhibit of Pompeiian artifacts currently touring the country. On one of the recovered wall paintings is depicted a marvelous version of Pan, the satyr—eyes aslant, ears tapering to a long, graceful point, manhood rampant. A far cry, perhaps, from the Twentieth Century's mild cookie elf. But not so far from a certain popular Vulcan named Spock, who could easily be related to the likes of Poul Anderson's elegant Nordic Elves. (There is some debate as to whether or not J.R.R. Tolkien's were graced with puncti form hearing organs, but in my opinion an elf without pointed ears is like a Hobbit without furry feet).

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When an artist falls in love with an intangeable ideal, it is natural for him or her to want to bring that ideal to life and share it with others. But with regard to elves, other people were always beating me to it. Walt Disney probably never realized that the extreme liberties he took in his interpretation of Barrie's classic *Peter Pan* produced the silver screen's first perfect representation of an elf. *Alakazam The Great*, directed by Osamu Tezuka, was another excellent animated cartoon containing elfin characters. As long as films and books like these were available for repeated viewing and reading, I never much felt the urge to tell elf stories of my own. It didn't seem to me that I had much to add to existing fantasy lore.

Sometimes it takes a good boot in the behind from a totally unexpected source to get one off one's duff. That boot came in March 1977 when my husband, Richard, and I viewed Ralph Bakshi's *Wizards* for the first time. Five minutes into the film, Richard leaned over to me and said, "You ought to be working for this guy!" I had never seen anything like *Wizards* before, and I left the theatre in a daze, mubling, "Elves are legal...?" all the way home.

How often had I painted or drawn little elfin characters similar to Bakshi's without ever knowing that *Wizards* was being made? Fourteen (or is it fifteen?) viewings later, I still love the film for many reasons—but most especially for the inspiration it provided.

My mind went to work at once on concepts for a comic book adaptation of *Wizards*, and even a sequel. I began writing almost weekly to Bakshi and received some encouraging responses. But after a while it dawned on me that I really wanted to do something with elfin characters of my own creation. Bakshi had given me that needed boot in the motivation, and as a result, *Elfquest* took shape almost overnight.

A lot of stored up "what ifs" and "wouldn't this be neats" tumbled forth as Richard and I began to build the fantastic prehistoric world in which our newly-created characters would live. I hasten to say that *Elfquest* was and is most definitely a joint effort. If I bake the cake, Richard supplies the frosting, so to speak. The basic story line and invention of characters is my responsibility, while Richard acts as editor and "literary embellishment engineer."

We star with a story conference, which can take place anytime, anywhere. Our heated debates about the nature of Trolls have elicited many a surprised glance from waitresses at the local Friendly's. Once the basic plot has been hashed out, I write a full script and do layouts of the art. Then we go back over the script, argue the fine points some more, polish it and finalize it. That's when I at last settle down to hauling the Higgins.

Cutter, our lead player, was the first character to solidify. A wish-dream synthesis of Peter Pan and Conan, he possesses all the qualities that, to me, epitomize elfhood. Childishly impulsive, yet spiritually attuned to his environment and the needs of those close to him, Cutter is a capricious youngster who must continually discipline himself to assume the responsibilities of leadership. Helping to control and direct his chief's sometime volatile emotions is *Skywise*, a steadfast and generally more level-headed brother/friend, who could be said to play Hutch to Cutter's Starsky.

Physically, all our elf charcters (with special exceptions) average four feet in height and tip the scales at about sixty pounds. They have four fingers on each hand because it looks interestingly alien and because it just seems to suit them.

Unlike Bakshi's Weehawk, who derives much of his feisty charm from being all head, feet, and mouth, the bodily proportions of Pini Elves are fairly normal, if somewhat dawrfish. Generations ago, according to our story, Cutter's ancestors were very tall and delicately built. But in order to survive the hardships of the primitive world into which they were suddenly thrust, these elfin aliens devolved, growing smaller... and much meaner. The end product is Cutter's barbaric tribe of Wolfriders. Fierce, furtive and feral (I love my Thesaurus), they dwell in the forest and compete continually with both human and non-human predators for survival.

Rather than simply recount the story so far, I should state here that *Elfquest* has been plotted to a logical conclusion, which nonetheless leaves room for further adventures if they are called for. Right now we anticipate fourteen issues and a publishing schedule of three issues per year. If all goes well, the series should reach its grand finale in 1982.

The friendship of Cutter and his advisor/confidant, Skywise, is a symbolic representation of my friendship with Richard. As a matter of fact, many of the incidents in *Elfquest* are artistically exaggerated versions of our own personal experiences. I think this gives our stories the aura of freshness and sincerity for which many of our readers have already expressed appreciation. We are not rehashing a tired formula. Nor are we striving to mimic Tolkien, Bakshi, Marvel Comic's *Wierdworld*, or any other current work of fantasy.

From our point of view, the integrity of a work can partly be evidenced by its originality. That is why there are no half-crazed, grizzled sorcerers cackling over cauldrons; no epic crusades to save the world for Mom and dreamberry pie in *Elfquest*. We deliberately set our story in a time and place where our characters can seek their heritage against a backdrop of mostly natural elements.

Strong characterization is more important to us than spectacle. We try not to let our Little People get involved in situations which will overwhelm them or cause them to fade under the glare of too-awesome events. The very contrast between the latently magical elves and the distinctly natural world they've fallen into serves well enough to emphasize the elves' alien origin.

Working on *Elfquest* has been an incredible learning experience. While I am very good at portraying facial expression and body language, my great weakness is an impatience with background. I am so in love with my characters that I can't wait to get to the next panel! But an awareness of this has helped me slow down, think, and balance the pages so that the scenery lives and breathes along with the players.

We've given thought to just how far we want to go in the area of sex and violence, but actually, *Elfquest* more or less dictates its own limits. We are going to be honest, though not morbidly so, about the effects of violence when it happens. Sex will be treated as a natural, beautiful part of life—subtly suggested rather than explicitly exposed. We feel that there is power in understatement, and, oddly enough, great excitement in restraint. The letters of comment we have received so far seem to bear this out.

Not just a few people have already picked up on the strong, though implied, sensuality of our characters. But here we go back to the influence of the wood-god Pan, again. Elves are naturally sensual and seductive, enviable in their permanent childhood, and poignant in their fragility. But to our knowledge, no one has yet done anything like an elfin *Roots*, which is essentially what *Elfquest* is all about.

Much of what passes for entertainment nowadays seems to be very stressful. Blockbuster movies, books, magazines—graphic overstatement of all kinds in an effort to wring the last drop of lucrative response from the public, have numbed our imaginations and have made the delicate things in life seem not worth acknowledging. When overkill becomes the norm, there's really nowhere to go but down.

If *Elfquest* has any one thing to offer, I would say that it is good, old-fashioned romance. *Star Wars*, in all its innocence and joy, was greeted with an almost pathetic flood of gratitude from an ideal-starved public. Richard and I were among those grateful and we have been encouraged to believe that people are not so jaded after all—that they *will* reach out to take an affectionate hand gently offered. That is a very exciting concept, and though *Elfquest* will contain elements of adventure and suspense required for good storytelling, we hope we will be able to touch people's emotions on a level that is unusually intimate for the comic book medium.

Richard and I are pessimistic optimists. We become involved in crazy schemes, blithely take outrageous gambles, then sit back and wonder how we ever get ourselves into these messes. When we decided to take over the publication of *Elfquest* ourselves, we knew that we'd end up living on spaghetti and I.O.U.'s for awhile. At one point, when the venture seemed just too crazy to believe in, I voiced my skepticism.

"But look," I said through a mouthful of pizza (pizza is Italian soul food, guaranteed to lift the spirits and gird the loins in the face of all adversity. We consume two family-sized ones a week. Each.)

"But look," I said, "there are thousands of little independent publishers out there just barely scraping by—barely breaking even. What chance have *we* got? We're just a drop in the ocean!"

Richard, my Skywise, looked up with that solemn, level gaze that always preceeds one of his classic profundities (olive oil dripping off his beard not withstanding).

"Then sparkle...goddamit...SPARKLE!" he answered.

How can one argue with that?

AN INFORMAL HISTORY OF COMIC BOOKS is the story of a by-gone age. Many of us are old enough to remember those days of Camelot, Ike, the first space ships, the early days in Vietnam when everyone still supported the war effort. But both young and old regard it as something of a dream. Those were also the days that birthed the modern comic book.

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But most of all there is fun and rich, golden memories.